THE LUCK OF RATHCOOLE

JEANIE GOULD LINCOLN

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THE LUCK OF RATHCOOLE. Illustrated.
A JAVELIN OF FATE.
MARJORIE'S QUEST.
A GENUINE GIRL.
AN UNWILLING MAID.
A PRETTY TORY.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

The Luck of Rathcoole

MISS MOPPET

THE LUCK OF RATHCOOLE

Being The *Romantic Adventures* of Mistress Faith Wolcott (sometime known as "*Miss Moppet*") during her sojourn in New York at an *Early Period* of the *Republic*

By Jeanie Gould Lincoln

Author of "*An Unwilling Maid*," "*Marjorie's Quest*," "*A Pretty Tory*," *etc.*

When Nugent shall with Nugent wed,
A curse will fall on Rathcoole's head.
When Shamrock and the Thistle twine,
Woe, woe, to those of Nugent's line!
Luck will be lost, and found no more,
Till Green seeks Blue on foreign shore.

The Prophecy.

Boston & New York
Houghton Mifflin Company
1912

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Published February 1912

To

Charles W. Gould, Esq.

Some hearts there are, in this world of ours,
  Kindly, and bright, and gay,
Who remember you only in days of flowers,
  When life has the freshness of May.
And others there be, when the sky 's o'ercast,
  And a mist hangs, heavy and drear,
Who do not forget, as life's rain falls fast,
  The flowers of the Yester-Year.

There 's a heart I know, who in kinship's ties,
  Is ever loyal and warm ;
A heart that remembered the sunny skies,
  And never failed in the storm.
To that dear heart to-day I send
  Greeting, faithful and true ;
With whatever of merit it holds, my friend,
  I offer my book — *to you.*

August 1st, 1911.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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From drawings by Douglas J. Connah

The Luck of Rathcoole

CHAPTER I

At the Inauguration — 1789

THE sun was rising over the Bay of New York and the Highlands of Neversink caught its earliest beams. Looking seaward from the deck of a man-of-war which had cast anchor in the North River at sundown the night before, many and various craft could be seen on both the New Jersey and New York shores, especially the former, where lay the State Barge which was to convey General Washington to the Battery on his way to be inaugurated first President of these United States.

Leaning against the taffrail stood a young man, glass in hand, gazing intently down the bay. Although the flag that floated at the masthead was the French Tricolor, he was evidently not of that nationality, but, to an experienced eye, his commanding height and air of authority

belied his civilian dress, which was worn with a precision that told of military training. As he closed his glass and turned from the vessel's side, a kindly hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Nugent, *mon ami*, I ver' moche regret to lose you," said the newcomer, in somewhat halting English. Then, with a laugh full of *bonhomie*, the speaker relapsed into his native tongue: "You must give me very particular instructions as to my future conduct while you visit these shores, lest I make for you more trouble than pleasure."

"You are, as always, kind, Victor," replied his friend, in French as fluent as the other's. "The day will come when I will explain to you much that seems now strange and uncalled-for. Meanwhile, I thank you from my heart for all your good-fellowship. Faith! since my captain put me in your charge three months ago in Paris you have not only treated me like a brother, but, kindlier still, have admitted me to your friendship and confidence."

"Name it not"—with a wave of the hand; "and now you go?"

"If the boat be ready," replied Nugent.

"There are those I must see in yonder city before the pageant of General Washington's arrival makes the crowd too dense to get about. Remember, Count, the address which will reach me; stay, I 'll read it to you" — and he opened the paper which he was about to hand him. "'T is called 'The Sign of the Sturdy Beggar,' a longshoreman's lodging-place on the North River side, and if you have aught to send me, use French for safety, lest your message fall into unfriendly hands."

"Monsieur le Comte, the boat awaits your order," said a petty officer, approaching the friends.

The Count de Valdemont walked down the deck, his hand on Nugent's shoulder.

"And the ball to-night, *mon ami*," he said softly. "If *la belle* Patrice is to be there, no doubt you will be in her train."

Nugent frowned. "You mistake, Victor," he began; then a spark of humor and gay daring lit up his eyes, and he gripped the Count's hand: "Have it as you will — I can never make you take the Anglo-Saxon view, and am weary of assuring you — "

"That you are like other men," laughed the Frenchman. "*Bien*, if you fall into trouble, remember that my ship and her captain are always at your command during our stay in port. *Adieu*, *mon cher*, *adieu*. Belle Fortune attend you."

And after the fashion of his nation, he held Nugent in warm embrace, and leaned over the companionway waving his chapeau in farewell as the small boat pulled rapidly off.

Notwithstanding the many vessels and small craft that were darting up and down the river, the ship's boat made good headway to the shore, and Nugent, seated in the stern, gave the steering direction to the sailors which brought them in good time to the landing at the foot of Cortlandt Street. Here at the ferryway he landed, and pulling his cloak around his shoulders (for the early morning air was somewhat chilly), it served to hide his features from the gaze of any casual passer-by. Early as it was, the streets were filling up rapidly, and Nugent's keen eye took in the familiar landmarks as he walked rapidly up Broadway to John Street.

"The old town looks much the same," he thought, as he stepped courteously aside to permit the passage of a portly dame, who, with her equally comfortable-looking husband, were unmistakably Knickerbockers; "ten years have not widened its streets, which remind me of Amsterdam, with a touch of London town. What a boy I was then, and, 'faith, am still, in a way"—a careless smile curved his lips. "Not even war, or foreign lands, have knocked the devil-may-care spirit out of me which played such mischief with my father. I wonder if he has come up from Virginia for this occasion; more likely, I fear, to be sulking on the shores of the James River since his beloved Lord Howe and the redcoats have sailed away. Gad! the memories throng fast and furious; I must find Patrice at once. She said a message would reach her at the theatre. This must be John Street to the best of my recollection, and yonder lies the building which I seek."

So thinking, Nugent surveyed the playhouse, at that period the most frequented theatre in the city by women of fashion. The doors were not yet opened, but a somewhat untidy-looking

youth stood waiting before them. He pulled off his hat civilly, as Nugent approached.

"Good-morning to your worship," he said. "Might you be looking for any one? The place is usually open by now, but we city-folk are all alive for the great doings at City Hall; pray, do you come up from the Battery where General Washington is to land?"

"I shall go there presently," said Nugent. "But I have an errand here if I can gain admittance."

"That's what I'm waiting for, sir; but it will be a good half-hour before worthy old Nicholas, the doorkeeper, gets here. He is taking his breakfast yonder," pointing to a house a few doors below where a sign "Ye Gentlefolks' Coffee-House" swung on rusty hinges upon a yellow wall.

"If I can get a hot cup of coffee —"

"Oh, aye, sir," interrupted the lad eagerly; "'t is my mother who provides breakfast and supper for the players. Nicholas always sits on the small bench at the left as you enter. Shall I go with you?"

"Thank you, it is not necessary," returned

Nugent, bestowing a sixpence on the lad, as he pursued his way toward the yellow house. Below the sign aforesaid was a low, wide window formed of many small panes of glass, and at the side of it a door through which Nugent passed without knocking. The floor was neatly sanded, and the benches, of which there were six or seven, appeared cleanly enough, while the rough deal tables were set with pewter cups and blue-and-white plates of ordinary delf. At one table stood a rosy-cheeked girl, cutting bread, and at the other an elderly woman was pouring steaming coffee from a pewter pot. Nugent threw his cloak on the nearest bench, and seated himself next a little old man who appeared to be the only customer. He made a low bow as he moved to give more room to the newcomer.

"Do not incommode yourself," said Nugent. "I am told the coffee is good here, and would like a cup of it."

"Your service, sir. Dame Vrooman has furnished me and the players this five years or more, and once you sample it I wager you will come again."

"No doubt," said Nugent, as the rosy-cheeked girl set both coffee and bread before him. "I see I am full early for admission to the Theatre Royal."

"Humph!" said the old man, turning quick, dark eyes upon him; "then, good sir, you have known this playhouse before?"

Nugent bit his lip; he had not meant to slip in his speech: truly this was a bad beginning.

"How so?" he asked quietly. "Is not that its name?"

"It was the name, but since times have changed in New York we call it by the name of the street. I think, sir," — the old man spoke in a lower tone, and glanced shrewdly up into his face, — "I think I knew you once. I am Nicholas Staats, and you are the young blade who once took shelter — "

Nugent's hand came down swiftly on the old man's knee. "Hush!" he said, in his ear. "Your memory is good, but oblige me by saying no more at present."

"Certainly, sir; I am greatly honored by your recollection. In those days you know of I was an actor and played small parts with some suc-

cess, but ill-luck"— he sighed, and buried his face in his coffee-mug. "I am content to be a humble menial in a house which I still love. Tell me how I can serve you. I remember that night how gallantly you —"

"Be good enough to forswear memory so far as I am concerned." Nugent's tone was one of authority, though still kindly. "Finish your breakfast and come with me where I can explain my presence here to-day."

"Katrine," called the older woman, "the gentleman waits for his accounting. — I hope the coffee was to your liking, sir?"

Nugent rose, laid down the shilling which Katrine blushingly informed him was the price of his breakfast, and throwing on his cloak left the coffee-house accompanied by Nicholas.

When they gained the theatre they found Hans still waiting patiently. Nicholas unlocked the door, and ushered Nugent into a tiny room, or closet, which appeared to be his special domain. But before rejoining his visitor, Hans was given special directions to scrub and clean.

"'T is the opening night, Hans, for the new Irish actress, Mistress O'Halloran, and many

of the gentlefolk will be present. The scene-shifters and property-man are due at nine; see that all be ready, and call me the moment that they appear. Meanwhile I am in waiting for any patron who needs a stall; do not neglect to notify me, as the house is already nearly sold."

Having thus put business matters straight for the moment, Nicholas closed the door of his room, and offering Nugent the only chair it contained, mounted his high stool from whence he dispensed the billets used by the-atre-goers.

"I trust you will honor the house to-night, sir. It is to be a grand occasion; we have secured for one week Miss O'Halloran to perform in 'The School for Scandal,' Mr. Sheridan's play, and, as perhaps your honor knows, she is a great lady on t' other side of the water. All New York is agog to see her, not only because she is a famous actress, but because she is the guest of Apthorpe House, where a fine ball will be given in her honor after the play to-night."

Nugent listened quietly as Nicholas ran on.

He was obtaining the information he desired without asking for it. Evidently the old man was not averse to a little gossip.

"Mistress O'Halloran the guest at Apthorpe House? Is not that the mansion where Lord Howe had headquarters in the late war?"

"Aye, sir; that was at the battle of Harlem. And 't is only of late that our good Whig families have changed their attitude about visiting the mansion, or, to put it from the Tory point of view, since its fine doors have been thrown open to rebels." The old man chuckled for a moment, and then resumed: "You see, we at the theatre hear and see much of the movements of the quality."

"No doubt. So you think there will be a large gathering to-night at the ball of which you speak?"

"Surely: it was told me yesterday that two of our monstrous fine Whigs, Madam Van Cortlandt and Mistress Betty Yorke, were to be of the party, and where they go the rest of the Whigs will follow. And I also heard that Mistress Yorke will have with her at to-night's ball the new beauty, her sister, who has just

come down from Litchfield to be present at the ceremonies of inauguration."

Out on the clear spring air came suddenly the chime of old St. Paul's bell, and quickly following it the bell of the Middle Dutch Church on Nassau Street.

Nicholas Staats sprang to his feet and shouted: —

"Hurrah! Inauguration Day has begun! That's the signal for the State Barge to start from the Jersey shore with General Washington aboard. Thank God, I lived to see this day!"

"And I must be off," said Nugent. "I came to leave a note for Mistress O'Halloran. Can I entrust you with it, Nicholas? Mind you, I do not wish it delivered in a way to attract attention, but" — he hesitated as he saw the old man's smile — "I know you are to be trusted."

"Your pardon, sir," replied Nicholas, as he caught the young man's frown. "I have at least six billets locked in my drawer here for the fair dame. *I* was young once."

Nugent laughed. "I grant it, but be sure this one reaches her without delay. This for

yourself" — and he slipped a gold coin into the old man's hand.

It was instantly returned.

"Not from your honor, sir," said Nicholas reproachfully. "Do you think I forget — "

"Nay, I bade you do so; shake hands, man, and forgive my testiness."

As Nugent turned into Broadway he debated for a moment whether to continue in an easterly direction, but mending his pace decided to proceed downtown instead. The street was rapidly filling; from every doorway and around each corner came a pleasure-seeking but orderly crowd, all evidently bound in the same direction, toward the City Hall where Chancellor Livingston was to administer the oath to the President-elect. Nugent, long a stranger, eagerly scanned the faces; not one among them appeared familiar, and although the streets and even the doorways seemed to give him welcome, a pang of homesickness rent his heart as he realized that ten years of absence and a life of wild adventure had brought him back like an alien to his native land.

The City Hall, which stood on the corner

of Wall and Broad Streets, was decorated with many flags and banners, as were the houses opposite and around it, and those mansions whose good fortune it was to possess balconies were crowded almost to overflowing with fair dames and gentlemen, all arrayed as beseemed the times. Many were in gay colors, some with powdered hair, some wore their own pretty locks curled and puffed high on their heads, and all were in the highest spirits and gayest moods. There were the Rutgers, the Van Cortlandts, the Lewises, and Stuyvesants, vying with each other to do honor to the day and occasion, while the crowd below gazed admiringly up at the balconies, and commented upon their occupants in audible tones.

In one balcony, almost directly opposite the centre of attraction, sat four ladies, two gentlemen, and two children, and the group seemed well worthy the attention it apparently attracted. Not only were the dames wonderfully gowned, but the children were little cherubs with golden curls; the girl in quaint mob-cap, and the boy dressed in miniature Continental uniform of buff and blue, his little cocked hat surmounting

his curls, and even the tiny dress-sword was worn at his side. He clapped his hands as the different military commands marched past into the square, and his little voice sounded shrilly overhead as he cried: —

"Oh, muvver, look! look! 't is Uncle Oliver; see, down, way down the street, is it not he? How grand he looks, with his soldiers all drawn up for the salute."

"Bless the child!" cried a woman in the crowd below. "'T is a brave-looking master for his six years."

"Six! Surely he is more, dame?" said her companion, who stood at her elbow. "Methinks 't is more than that length of time since you went to attend Mistress Yorke when the lad was born."

"You are wrong, Reuben; six years come Candlemas."

A long, loud shout interrupted the pair. The street was in a tumult of applause as the fifes and drums sounded, and the guns fired a salute, and the stately figure of General Washington appeared upon the City Hall balcony accompanied by Chancellor Livingston with a

distinguished company, and again and again the irrepressible delight of the people broke forth at sight of their beloved Chief, who stood acknowledging the plaudits with moistened eyes.

In the balcony just alluded to, Betty Yorke and her party forgot to watch the children, and that instant the tiny boy patriot seized to climb up the frail railing in front, in order to obtain a better view; but his foot slipped, and without a sound the little fellow was thrown violently forward. In the street below had been erected tall poles at intervals, between which were ropes on which to hang lanterns for the night illuminations, and as the child pitched over the railing he struck the line and instinctively caught it in his tiny hand. Hardly had he done so when quick as a flash a man in the crowd below spied the hanging figure and realized its peril. Down on the ground he dashed his enveloping cloak, and up the nearest pole with a sailor's wonderful agility sprang Nugent hand over fist, just in time to seize the boy around the waist and slide with him in safety to the ground.

"Put me down, please," said a small voice, with a suspicious quaver, as Nugent looked into the swimming blue eyes. "I don't know how I did it" — a gulp. "Farver will never forgive me if I cry an' disgrace my uniform" — a long sigh. "I 'm not much frightened, and I fank you, kind sir — "

A wild cry reached Nugent's ears. It came from inside the mansion against whose portal the pair stood. The door flew open, and on the threshold, pale with terror, outstripping the others of her party, Betty Yorke caught her boy in her arms.

"Noll, Noll, my darling, are you injured?"

"No; this kind gentleman climbed up the pole and fetched me down, muvver," cried the hero of the moment, seizing her around the neck and with difficulty restraining a burst of tears. "Oh! he 's gone!"

But Nugent, darting through the crowd as best he could, was half a square away through the park, and as he fled he muttered to himself: —

"Another second and he would have seen me! Gad! 't was a devilish lucky escape."

CHAPTER II

The Wager

"MOPPET, Moppet, do you really mean it?"

"Most truly I do; indeed, you are slow of wit this evening!"

"But — but" — Peggy Provoost sprang from her seat and clasped her hands in breathless amazement that was half-reluctant admiration. "Oh, I wish I had your courage!"

"Courage?" quoth Miss Moppet, disdain shining plainly in her sparkling eyes. "What are you prating about? As if it takes any special bravery when one has the kindly shelter of a mask and domino. You have stopped too long in that staid and sleepy Knickerbocker town up on the Hudson, Peggy, and know nothing of New York."

"Neither do you," retorted Peggy, with unexpected spirit. "You have only three days' advantage of me."

"Fie! Peggy, you forget that I was here

during the evacuation of the British, though I was but a child in those days. How Peter and I used to frolic and tease Betty; did he never tell you of our pranks?"

"Oh, I know all that," interrupted Peggy; "but to think of talking — aye — even dancing with a man to whom, mayhap, one has not yet been properly presented —"

"Peggy, Peggy, 'get thee to a nunnery,'" cried Miss Moppet, giving way to laughter as she dragged her friend down on the chair beside her. "Cannot you perceive that that is the very mischief and frolic of the ball? Indeed, 't is quite French and naughty," added Moppet, with a little prim air which recalled her roguish childhood. "So naughty that I am quite sure Betty would never have given me leave to attend it but for Gulian Verplanck's opposition. To hear Gulian harangue puts Betty quite past her patience, thank fortune! And add to that, my good and dear brother, Geoffrey Yorke, invariably aids me in a debate, so between us, behold, I won the day."

"And pray what costume do you affect?" said Peggy.

For answer Miss Moppet flew to her brass-nailed trunk which stood beside the bed, and from it she drew forth a parcel whose contents increased Peggy's bewilderment as she gazed.

"What do you call that?" asked she, as Moppet held up a short skirt of red and yellow, with an accompanying body of the same material, and an odd-looking jacket whose adornment was chiefly colored beads sewed on in strange grotesque designs. "And, oh! strings on strings of necklace and wampum — why, I verily do believe 't is —"

"Pocahontas!" cried Moppet. "And the moccasins, Peggy; see, here they are, and the laced leggings. But you do not know the best of it yet," flying to the mahogany wardrobe; "here is my domino, which instantly transforms the savage princess into a French dame of to-day;" and she threw over her head a gayly flowered beruffled garment which extended from her throat to her feet, and whose hood covered her pretty hair, making a most effective disguise.

"You see, Peggy, I made this Indian dress myself up in Litchfield a few years ago when we had a little play (did you know we had such

in sober New England?), wherein I portrayed Pocahontas. It was in burlesque, you must know; I wrote the lines myself, and even Aunt Euphemia was betrayed into laughter over it and the dance I gave. Now, Peggy, I must pledge you to silence, for, to confess the truth, — the solemn, dreadful truth, — nobody knows that I am wearing it to-night. Betty meant me to put on a ball-gown under the domino, and will never be aware that I have worn the Indian dress, which is far more original, instead."

But Peggy was still unsatisfied. "Did you not tell me that the guests unmasked finally, Moppet? Then how are you to explain to Mistress Yorke?"

"I shall vanish, Peggy, vanish, like our childhood's friend, Cinderella; I confess I always longed to play that trick, though for the matter of my costume I am sufficiently disguised by the domino, as you have seen, and you may trust me to invent an excuse for keeping it on."

"You are certainly gone mad," sighed Peggy, to whom, brought up in Albany by the most

rigid and prosaic of Knickerbocker aunts, this escapade sounded like the very depths of wickedness and folly. Indeed, nothing but her love and loyalty to fascinating, bewitching Faith Wolcott saved that madcap maiden from a speedy disclosure of her plot, and even now Peggy's tender conscience smote her, lest by keeping silence she was dealing unfairly with Mistress Betty Yorke whose guest she was.

"I vow there 's method in it," went on Moppet's gay voice, as she replaced the Pocahontas dress in the trunk. "And, to make a clean breast of it, I 've a wager on to add to this evening's fun."

"A wager!"

This was worse and worse; had not Aunt Anneke warned her against the evil of betting in card-playing, sinful New York?

"Why not? There is n't even a penny in it; only a silk kerchief against a pair of gauntlets."

"Oh, with whom?" cried Peggy eagerly.

"With Philip Van Cortlandt. 'T is this way, Peggy. There is a Frenchman come to town who has set all the maids afire with his good

looks and gallantry, and I had the luck to meet him at breakfast yesterday. He is Leftenant, the Baron de Grammont, who awaits his ship La Touraine, and, if you please, Philip must needs prove himself a jealous ass because monsieur paid various compliments and some attention to me. As if Master Philip can presume upon the visit he saw fit to pay me at Litchfield last month on his way to Albany; and think, forsooth, that he holds some sort of claim upon my consideration because —" Moppet halted abruptly in her speech; she had said more than she meant, and had the grace to turn rosy red. "Oh, never mind that part. The Frenchman was so instructive on the subject of a *bal masqué* and the ways thereof in France that afterward on the way home, where Philip insisted on accompanying me, I wagered him that I would manage to capture some trifle that belongs to monsieur (if I can penetrate the disguise he wears to-night) just to prove to that gentleman that we New England maids have wit and wile equal to a Parisian. This truly patriotic view pleased Philip;" and Moppet's smile was the very incarnation

of mischief as she seized Peggy around the waist and danced her up and down the room.

"In practice for the ball," said a laughing voice, and the girls wheeled about to confront Mistress Yorke on the threshold of the room.

Seven years had but added to the grace and charm of lovely Betty Wolcott, in whose romance and marriage her little sister, Miss Moppet, had played so brave a part, and Geoffrey Yorke was still as much her devoted lover as when he wore her rose-colored ribbon next his heart. But whereas Betty was lovely (and nothing could detract from her special charm), Faith Wolcott possessed that rare gift of the gods, absolute beauty, the story of whose fame was destined to come down even to this generation.

Taller than Betty, but with the same slender shape and grace of movement and, at times, great dignity of carriage, her head was beautifully set upon her shoulders, and the shapely throat was full and rather long. Her face was oval, and Betty's own dimples smiled around the charming mouth, while one, most coquettish of all, lurked high in the left cheek, where

it only vouchsafed appearance when its possessor was bent on some special piece of mischief. Her nose was clear-cut and rather short, with delicate sensitive nostrils, and the eyebrows, darker than her hair, had the slight droop at the corners so rarely met with. But the glory of Faith Wolcott's beauty lay in her changeful eyes, which were neither blue, gray, nor yet green, but a lovely blending of all three, whose varying hue changed with her mood, and therein lay her most captivating and perilous charm.

"We — that is — I — " stammered Peggy guiltily, as Miss Moppet sank breathlessly in a high-backed chair; "I am not yet acquainted with your New York step, and Moppet — "

"Was demonstrating," laughed the culprit; "but I fear me, Betty, that Madam Apthorpe would be dumb with horror if Peggy and I flew around her ballroom in that fashion."

"It was hardly the minuet time, Peggy," said Betty, as usual joining in her mischievous sister's fun. "I do not need to warn you of Moppet's pranks; she would not be Moppet without them. I only came to tell you that the chariot

and pair will be at our door in half an hour, for Geoffrey says the streets are so full of wayfarers and strangers who have come for General Washington's inauguration that it is best to start early, lest we be late for the maskers. Come with me to my room, Peggy, where I have a costume prepared for you; 't is that of a Dutch peasant girl, which will become your blonde hair and blue eyes."

"Dear Mistress Yorke," cried Peggy, quite overcome by this unexpected kindness. "I never dreamed that I was to accompany you — "

"Fie, Peggy! Did you fancy that I bid you to New York to hide you from society?"

"You are going everywhere with us," said Moppet, giving Peggy's shoulder a loving little pat as she playfully pushed her guest toward Betty. "And what Betty does not teach you, *I* will, even to the best of my frolics."

"Frolics, indeed? You will never be aught but a madcap, I fear," sighed Betty, with pretended dismay, as she closed the door.

Apthorpe Mansion, one of the great houses of New York during the Colonial days, was

far out on Bloomingdale Road, and stood facing the Hudson River, whose waters lapped the large grounds below the gardens. Of fine proportions were the great pillars which reached from porch to roof, with stately gables above the door, and a wide hall, running from front to rear, had on either side high-spanned spacious rooms whose tall mirrors reflected the guests, and where, as a chronicler of the day quaintly writes, "there were gathered the state and fashion of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, all most finely arrayed in so-called fancy costume, the ball being patterned after those sometime given in Paris, as recently told by Mr. Benjamin Franklin."

Dancing had begun, and music rang gayly out as two gentlemen passed inside the mansion, and slipping off their long, flowing cloaks, which were deftly taken by the black servants in livery at the door, they sauntered slowly down the crowded hall. Both wore the French uniform (white with green facings, and dress-swords with tricolored sash), and reaching the doorway of the ballroom, paused silently on the threshold, to watch the dancing. Taller than

most men, the pair had such an air of distinction that several maskers turned to look a second time at them as they passed, and as the taller officer bent his head to adjust his mask more closely, a woman's voice said softly: —

" Monsieur is perhaps comparing this ball with those of *la belle France?* As we are but a young nation, I pray monsieur, be merciful to our youth!"

The Frenchman wheeled about, for the French of the unknown speaker, in its gay mockery, was almost Parisian. In the crowd about him there appeared but two female figures; one, in a much beflowered red domino, had the hood drawn closely over her hair. The other, who was without domino, wore the complete costume of an Indian girl. Her bare arms and shapely neck were slightly bronzed, and her abundant chestnut hair fell far below her slender waist.

" Mademoiselle is unkind." The officer bent his head gallantly to the dame in domino. " How can we criticize what is above criticism — the charming, *ravissante* American woman?"

From beneath the red domino came a faltering, somewhat resentful reply: —

"I — I — do not speak French, and, moreover," — indignantly, — "we have not been properly introduced!"

"Madam, I pray you, hold me excused," returned the supposed Frenchman in English as correct as his French had been. "I was mistaken in thinking you had just addressed me, and only followed the acknowledged custom of a masked ball."

Sweeping her a most elaborate bow, Nugent passed on in pursuit of the Indian girl who was now lost in the crowd of maskers.

"I wish — oh! — I do wish I had not been so hasty," wailed Peggy Provoost to herself. "Of course, Moppet will say I had my chance, but, alas! I was afraid to take it. Oh, where has Moppet gone! Now I am all alone, some one will surely speak to me. I'll try and find Mistress Yorke; her domino was pink."

Through the hall and the second drawing-room Nugent made what speed he could, but he was compelled to pause several times as some fair masker endeavored coquettishly to

detain him. Each, however, greeted him in English, and no voice had the soft, mocking ring of the one which had first accosted him. At last he drifted back into the ballroom, where, near the alcove of the musicians, he was caught in the crowd, and standing still for an instant felt a hand touch his sleeve lightly.

"Monsieur *qui rêvez*," said the self-same voice. "Of what are you dreaming?"

"Of mademoiselle, without doubt," was the quick reply.

At his elbow stood the Indian girl he sought.

"I only desired to penetrate monsieur's disguise; he now must admit that whether the ball meets his approbation or not, even an aborigine could find him out. Fie, monsieur, you do not even pay us the compliment of appearing in costume."

"Now who the devil does she take me for?" thought Nugent, but he adroitly answered: "Mademoiselle does me injustice. At the eleventh hour the wretch of a costumer failed to fetch my dress" — he hesitated for half a

second — "as a Musketeer of the King. Will mademoiselle pardon the humblest of her admirers, and tread a minuet with me?"

All the ardor of his Irish blood rose to meet the adventure as he looked down into the gray eyes which even the mask could not disguise. But the Indian girl shook her head.

"I do not know your minuet, monsieur; my forest dances with Indian braves are all that I can master."

And the gay mischief of her laugh again caught Nugent's ear.

"But if mademoiselle would permit," anxiously, "I could easily instruct her in the dance."

"And so display my ignorance and want of grace in this gay assembly? No, monsieur, make due allowance for the vanity of even an Indian girl, who at this very moment must hie away and find her Indian brave."

"Ah, do not punish me, mademoiselle; I, a stranger in a strange land. Perhaps, mademoiselle, out of her great goodness, would deign to teach me the dance which best pleases her out upon the green sward, away from this

heated ballroom. There are nooks a-plenty on the lawn of Apthorpe Manor where we may essay it."

For a swift second Miss Moppet caught her breath at this audacious proposal. Surely she had mistaken another for De Grammont. Now that she looked at him closely this man was taller, and although undoubtedly a Frenchman there was a dash and *élan* about him which was foreign to the Baron. The very spirit of the ball was upon her; why not? She could trust to her wit to steal away somehow when once outside, and what a fascinating adventure to relate to Peggy!

"Monsieur desires something easily granted," she said, very demurely, and Nugent's quick perception detected the different note, even though spoken casually. "There are steps from the low ballroom window beyond; can monsieur follow where I lead?"

"To the world's end," vowed Nugent fervently.

Who was this strange, bewitching girl who spoke French like a Parisian, and yet had the New England inflection in her voice? He had

no right to tarry with this fascinating stranger when Patrice O'Halloran had such urgent need of him, and he must go hunt for her among the guests; but Nugent came of a race who never failed a man or betrayed a woman, and he determined to see the adventure through.

As Miss Moppet made her way slowly across the room, her naughty little heart began to beat more quickly. She realized that she was doing a daring thing: what would Betty say to her, leaving the ballroom to go out on the lawn with a man, masked at that—a man whom she was certain now that she had never seen before, but a man who, in some mysterious way, she felt was a gentleman who would not take advantage of the situation?

Threading her way carefully, she reached the window, half determined to slip away as she set foot on the upper step; but Nugent was too quick for her, and had extended his hand and taken hers in the formal, graceful fashion that obtained when leading a partner to the dance. They stepped out on the green lawn, and under the spreading limbs of a great elm

Miss Moppet took her stand, facing him, with arms crossed on her breast.

"Monsieur will please remain erect," she said, mischief in her eyes, for Nugent, chapeau in hand, swept the bow of the French Court. "As I advance, monsieur must retreat, and then *voilà*, as I fly, monsieur will follow."

The humor of the gay challenge was Moppet's very own, and Nugent's spirit rose to meet it, as the strangely graceful figure swayed toward him and he slowly retreated before it, waiting with wary eyes for what he knew meant flight. But Fate is a jade who sometimes takes a hand in the deal, and as Moppet, still confronting him, began to glide backwards, there arose a sound of wheels, a whip cracked in the air, and Nugent turned his head.

"Mademoiselle," he whispered eagerly. His voice died in empty space; his eyes searched the lawn amazedly; like the fairy in the pantomime, the Indian maiden had vanished.

CHAPTER III

The Lady and the Mountebank

THE dusky handmaid who stood guard over the cloaks and wraps which Madam Apthorpe's guests had left in her charge, was beguiled into joining two fellow servants who were gazing at the gay crowd from the doorway of the room, and, consequently, she did not see a slender figure which slipped noiselessly through one of the windows that gave on the side porch. Brimming with fun and mischievous triumph at her successful escape, Miss Moppet darted into the corner where she remembered she had left her cloak, and underneath its ample folds she found and drew out a beflowered domino. Fearing to be seen while making the exchange, she threw the garment over her head, hurriedly tying the pretty hood under her chin before glancing at it, and, having completely covered her Indian dress with this disguise, looked down, to discover, that, whereas her own dom-

ino was pink, this one was yellow, and she had never laid eyes on it before.

For an instant she debated whether it would be best to search for her own, but a second thought arrested her. "I am safely disguised already," she said to herself; "if I tarry the maid will detect my having made the change of costume and so spoil my little plot. No, fair unknown, who has made off, perhaps intentionally, with my property, you may retain it for a while at least, and I will slip around to the ballroom entrance again. I wonder if monsieur is still hunting the Indian princess?"

It was perfectly easy for Moppet to regain the front porch, but there was no trace of the tall stranger, and entering the hall, a voice which she recognized as Philip Van Cortlandt's said to the masker on his arm, as Moppet brushed past the pair, "Did you say a pink domino, with a black mask? Nay; that was not Mistress Wolcott, for the masked dame had the accent of a foreigner and would not dance when I implored her."

"So Master Philip was flouted," smiled Mop-

pet, as the crowd caught her and wedged her into the alcove near the musicians.

For some minutes she stood still, greatly amused by watching the different maskers and trying to fathom who of her acquaintances were among them. Then her attention was claimed by the sound of a deep voice just behind her.

"I tell you, there must be no delay," it said; "if he should suspect for one moment that you are playing the game, you would lose all chance of thwarting him."

"I know it," answered a woman's voice.

"And yet, you hesitate," said the man, with a sneer. "Perhaps I can imagine why."

"How dare you!" came the woman's whisper. "Do you know the old Virginian is in New York, and they must not meet — yet?"

"No fear," mocked the deep voice. "My gentleman is too firmly impressed with the idea of his criminal act to desire *that* encounter. Curse him! I would I had him at my sword's point again!"

The scarcely veiled fury was so intense that Moppet, with instinctive terror, moved aside,

giving a swift but penetrating glance at the pair as she did so. The man, who wore the dress of a mountebank, was tall, thin, and somewhat ungainly; the woman wore a superb gown, the costume of Mary Stuart, with jewels of apparently great value which sparkled on her neck and arms. She was closely masked, but Miss Moppet judged from the turn of her throat and the well-cut mouth and chin that the wearer was both young, beautiful, and a stranger.

"To lose, as you did before, perhaps," was the quick retort. Then, more calmly, "But why should we quarrel? Our interests lie somewhat in the same direction, and only by sustained, well-planned effort can we accomplish—"

The music burst forth loudly, and Moppet lost the end of the sentence as the pair she was watching pushed their way past her and were hidden in the fresh crowd of maskers who had entered the ballroom.

"Will mademoiselle deign to give me one little dance? I had the hope to find her earlier, but there are three *dominos jaunes* like the one which mademoiselle wears, and, *pardieu*, I, myself, was lost among them."

A masker in the guise of a King's Musketeer was bowing and clicking his heels in a fashion that betrayed him at once to quick-witted Miss Moppet. This was De Grammont; for whom, then, was he mistaking her? She had half a mind to answer him in French, but a second thought told her that her own tongue was the better with which to bewilder him.

"And here have I been awaiting you, sir," she said demurely; "I am, alas! new to such balls, and crave instruction."

"Instruction!" laughed the Frenchman, taking her hand to lead her to the dance just forming on the floor; "since when has *la belle Patrice* required a tutor? Do I forget the last *bal d'opéra* in Paris when I had the happiness to be her partner? Mademoiselle is in her mood to tease—and in *la langue terrible* which I do not—"

A sweeping curtsy from her, an elaborate bow from De Grammont cut the sentence short, but Moppet had now the key to the situation as she smiled gayly beneath her mask. The O'Halloran!—*la belle Patrice*, the guest of the occasion!—then hers was the yellow domino.

Verily, this would prove a comedy of errors to more than one masker.

The minuet was danced, and during its stately measure Moppet had detected four of the other dancers — not to mention Betty Yorke who was her vis-à-vis, but who evidently had no idea of her roguish sister's proximity. Peggy had apparently been lost in the crowd; but time was passing, and if Miss Moppet meant to slip back into the anteroom and emerge as an Indian maiden — oh! horror of horrors! — *where* was her own pink domino, and how should she contrive to find it?

De Grammont, meanwhile, had been pouring his compliments and love-making into her ears, and she, with the utmost mischief, was doing her very best to play the part he had assigned her; but his tone was growing more familiar than Moppet liked, and instinctively she felt that she must dismiss him, if possible, without exciting his suspicions.

"Monsieur," she whispered, as he held her hand in the formal curtsy, "do you see the blue domino who was our vis-à-vis just disappearing through the ballroom door? It is our hostess,

Madam Apthorpe, and I am anxious to ascertain the hour of unmasking. Will you do me the favor to follow her and ask the question in my name?"

"But, mademoiselle,"—De Grammont's voice was one of wounded vanity,—"have I then failed to interest you to-night? It was not so in Paris—"

"Perhaps not"—Moppet's tone was beautifully compounded of mischief and coquetry; —"but this is New York and a new world, and monsieur and I must cry *vive la bagatelle!*—for to-night."

"And after?"

"Nay, we will answer that when you return, monsieur." Then, as he hesitated, a recollection of her wager occurring to her, she said mischievously; "If monsieur pleases, he can leave with me the cockade which adorns his chapeau. He will be sure, then, to return and secure it."

"Ah! Mademoiselle has *not* forgotten, then," whispered the Frenchman, as he tore off the tricolor, and pressing it in her hand, which he raised to his lips, he plunged into the crowd.

"How dare he!" thought Miss Moppet.

"The man presumes. I wonder what in the world the O'Halloran would have said to him? Meantime, I'll escape by the window as I did before; though how on earth I am to find my own domino and put it on before Betty catches sight of my Indian dress is more than I know. I'll leave it to Fate, or kind Fortune, who usually comes to my aid, even at the last moment."

Secure in her ability to elude pursuit, Moppet had barely reached the alcove when a hand was laid upon her arm, and a deep voice, which she instantly recognized, said in her ear:—

"Yellow domino, your mistress bids you give me the packet."

It was the mountebank standing before her, and he effectually barred her way out.

"You mistake," said Moppet calmly. "I do not know you, and I have no packet — nor mistress either, for that matter."

But the man tightened his grasp on her arm.

"Fool! Was not the gold I gave you to-day enough? Whether she bids you or not, I demand the packet."

"There are other yellow dominos here to-night; release my arm, sir; you are rude and insolent."

"'Rude and insolent,'" said another voice, while a tall figure arrayed in a fool's cap and bells stopped abruptly at Moppet's side. "Let go the lady's arm, fellow; did you not hear her bidding?"

As he spoke, the newcomer suddenly wrenched back the intruder's elbow, and Moppet, pausing not to thank her deliverer, darted swiftly through the window and ran down the steps of the mansion.

Casting a half-frightened glance behind her as she ran, she saw the mountebank appear in the window, and to her great relief, also saw that directly in front of the portico stood a family chariot which she at once recognized as belonging to Geoffrey Yorke. Here was a refuge from pursuit; she could hide in its spacious interior, and when the obnoxious domino disappeared slip back again into the mansion. With Moppet, to conceive a plan was to execute it; so, swift as her dainty feet could carry her, she sped around the back of the vehicle,

and opening the farther door so softly that Pompey, the negro coachman, sitting half asleep upon the box, neither saw nor heard, she sprang inside the friendly shelter, and sank breathless into its darkest corner. Then, feeling once again secure, she began to laugh softly at the varied adventures and singular happenings of this her first ball. But her laughter died on her lips almost as soon as it began, for there was a sudden rush of footsteps down the portico, a tall domino flung open the door, and a commanding voice spoke to Pompey: —

" Drive on, until I tell you to stop."

And to Moppet's dismay the stranger sprang inside the chariot and seated himself beside her.

For a moment terror seized Miss Moppet; was this retribution for her mad pranks? Then she bethought herself that there was no cause for alarm; this was her sister's chariot and Pompey was her servant. She would play the game out to the end. So she sat perfectly still until the man beside her spoke.

" Patrice," he said gently, " why do you fly from me? Do you repent the agreement we

made in Paris? Above all, I must have the locket. You promised to give it to me to-night, and I demand that you keep your word."

With a little thrill of excitement, Moppet recognized the voice. He could speak English, then, as well as he did French; — oh! had ever maiden such a charmingly romantic adventure!

"I do not desire to frighten you," went on the voice, "and I cannot conceive why you have broken such a compact. 'T is more than unkind, — it is cruel, in view of the hopes you raised in my breast — "

"Sir, I entreat you, say no more," broke in Moppet. "This is beyond the pastime of a masque. Say nothing to me which you may have cause to regret; for you have less knowledge of me, perhaps, than I of you."

Nugent bounded in his seat, and involuntarily his hand tore the fool's cap and bells from his head. "I beg ten thousand pardons," he cried; "the yellow domino you wear, madam, has a tiny black bow on the left arm which I was bidden to look for. I supposed it concealed" — he hesitated for a brief second —

"an old acquaintance with whom I had an appointment. I am overwhelmed with annoyance; I have intruded upon you; I have entered your coach without invitation; — what shall I say? I can only express my chagrin at my most unwarrantable behavior, and praying that you will consider it as part of the frolic and perhaps license of a masked ball, I take my leave."

He laid his hand upon the door and was about to open it when there came a sudden jolt, an outcry from Pompey, and through the window on the opposite side a pistol was thrust in Miss Moppet's face, and a hoarse voice cried: —

"Stand and deliver!"

"Footpads!" cried Nugent, springing in front of her, and so far as possible covering her person with his own. "Be not alarmed, madam; it may be only a masker's jest!"

As he spoke, he thrust open the door, sprang to the ground, and seized the wrist of the intruder.

CHAPTER IV

Miss Moppet encounters a Footpad

IN a life full of hairbreadth escapes Nugent's quick eye and strong arm, backed by almost reckless bravery, had turned many a desperate fight. Retaining his firm grip of the footpad's wrist, Nugent, hastily and instinctively, with his left hand turned the man's elbow inward and under him, a trick which he had learned in France with which to disarm an adversary. Shrieking with pain the man fell upon his knees, the pistol flew out of his hand into the road beyond them, and Nugent, setting his back to the chariot, tore off his domino of fool's cap and bells, threw his mask behind him, and drew his sword as the man who had stopped the horses dashed around the back of the vehicle to his comrade's aid.

"*Pardieu!*" swore Nugent, between his teeth. "Two — three — " another foe appeared; "I 've faced worse odds than this." Then, over his shoulder, "Drive on, madam, I beseech you."

But Miss Moppet did not answer. Silently and swiftly she had dropped out of the opposite door and swooped down upon the pistol which lay in full sight in the moonlight. Breathlessly she sprang back into the chariot, and steadying her hand against the open window just above Nugent's head, she fired straight into the face of the footpad nearest her. The man, who was endeavoring to pinion Nugent from the side, dropped in his tracks, but the third, with a furious oath, raised his bludgeon and struck viciously at Nugent's shoulder; then, seeing that both his companions were down, he plunged swiftly into the thick bushes at the roadside, which at once concealed him as he disappeared.

For a brief second Nugent swayed dizzily in his endeavor to regain his sword which the force of the last blow had driven from his hand to the ground. The horses, terrified by the shot, were plunging violently as Pompey tugged at the reins. Suddenly Nugent heard a rumble of wheels coming swiftly down the road; it would perhaps compromise the lady to be found in such a position.

MISS MOPPET ENCOUNTERS A FOOTPAD

"Madam," he gasped, as this thought crossed his mind, "for God's sake, drive on!"

"And leave you in such plight?—never!" cried Miss Moppet. "Climb instantly into the chariot beside me."

There was no time for further discussion. Nugent had barely opportunity to plunge headlong inside, for the horses tore madly off, Pompey striving valiantly to control them as they whirled down Bloomingdale Road on the way to the city.

The pair inside were each conscious that the other was panting for breath; Nugent, regardless that his arm hung helpless at his side, was trying to voice his admiration for the dauntless spirit which came so swiftly to his aid; and Miss Moppet, now that immediate danger was over, to her dismay found herself trembling from head to foot, and for the first time in her life afraid to speak lest she lose control of herself.

"Was ever woman so brave as you . . ."

"Oh, sir, you are badly hurt!"

The chariot swung to one side and a smothered exclamation betrayed his pain.

"Believe me, 't is nothing," whispered Nugent, his heart beating at the faltering tone of the charming voice; "but you, madam," — anxiously — "are you sure, *very* sure that you are unhurt? Did either of those ruffians lay finger on you? I could not see you, and could only strike blindly in your defense."

"Nay, sir; I did but little — "

"Yet you shot straight and firmly — "

"I had perhaps handled a pistol before." Miss Moppet was getting herself in hand again, but another jolt threw her almost into his arms, and she perceived that the stranger was unable to assist her. "I do believe that villainous footpad has injured you sorely. We shall soon be within the city, where you must at once find a surgeon."

"No, no — " Nugent struggled with his sudden faintness, and turned toward her, looking down into the beautiful eyes which her mask could not conceal, and his movement proved almost Miss Moppet's undoing, for (having slipped open her domino when she sprang for the pistol) he saw, even in the moonlight, the wampum beads upon her neck, the slender

bronzed arms, and lovely throat of the unknown mask who had danced with him under the elms on the lawn.

"The Indian Princess!" he gasped. "Madam, are you a witch, or a fairy, or am I under some enchantment of bewilderment and delight?"

Miss Moppet saw there was but one resource left her, and she took it with the promptness and directness which was one of her greatest charms.

"Monsieur," she said, with gentle dignity, "we have been playing a strange game to-night, and one that has grown suddenly serious. I do not know who you are — nor do you know me — and 't is best that we so remain. Can I trust you as an officer and gentleman to preserve my secret wherever or whenever we may meet again?"

"I swear it," whispered Nugent; "hard though it is that I may not know you. I have myself a task to perform which I have come across the ocean to accomplish. Until that is successfully completed I must retain my incognito, and therefore I have no right to offer you my devotion — *what* am I saying? Forgive

me if I am presumptuous, but never have I met such bravery, such witchery, and such loveliness combined as yours. Whatever betide, I shall carry the recollection of this night deep buried in my heart."

Even in the moonlight Miss Moppet could see the fire and passion of his eyes as they looked into hers, and under her mask she felt the rush of color to her cheeks and the startled beating of her heart. Their mad gallop was nearing its end; Pompey's horses were quieting down into their usual pace, and the city was close at hand.

"Monsieur, I thank you for your generosity and comprehension—" again the charming voice faltered, to Nugent's secret delight. "Where can I set you down? You must not venture forth alone in these crowded streets, injured as you are. Will you trust me enough to tell my coachman where to leave you?"

They had reached Broadway; the street was full of people, and the lanterns swung down its length far ahead, making it, for the times and date, a brilliant illumination. Nugent knew that it would not be easy to pass unnoticed,

yet he could not ask to be driven where De Valdemont's boat lay waiting for the Count, and the ship was now his safest place of refuge where he could remain until able to go ashore again.

"There is a hostelry" — he hesitated — "you would not know it, madam, but perhaps your servant may. It is called 'The Sign of the Sturdy Beggar.' If you will set me down at the corner where Crown Street meets Broadway you will do me the greatest possible kindness. See," he motioned toward the river, "it is the next corner below us."

Moppet leaned forward and gave the direction to Pompey, and as she turned, Nugent took her hand in his.

"You have trusted me," he said, "and I will one day prove that I am not unworthy of it. When that day comes, will you listen to me as I would fain have you? And until then will you carry a kindly thought of him who would die to do you service? Promise me — promise me this!"

Was it fancy, or did he feel the faintest pressure of her fingers?

"Monsieur, I will remember," said Miss Moppet.

The chariot stopped and Nugent swung open the door. He lifted the little hand to his lips. "*Adieu, mon cœur!*" he whispered, and was gone.

Pompey's whip flicked the air, and the chariot rolled on down Broadway, but that worthy shook his head as he ejaculated to himself: "Bress de good Lawd! 'pears like ole Pompey knows *dat* road! 'T was down dar Massa Oliver went when de Tories was a-chasin' him from de De Lancy ball, long time ago. What in de worl' is li'le missy up to now, I wonder?"

If he had but known it, that was a question which Miss Moppet was asking herself as she lay back in the chariot. What a strange ending to a masquerade frolic! This was a story to be told to no one, not even to her own dear Betty. "Never, never," said naughty Miss Moppet to herself, as she alighted at Geoffrey Yorke's door. But as she was about to hasten up the steps, a sudden thought occurred to her.

"Pompey," she stood on tiptoe, as the old

darky bent down from his seat to listen; "Pompey, tell Mistress Betty that I was tired and ran away home with you."

"Yes, missy," as she hesitated. "Yo' done trus' ole Pompey; — *he* ain't gwine to say nuffin' 'bout dat ar shootin' — bress de Lawd, li'le missy hit straight *dat* time;" and the irrepressible African chuckle made Moppet smile. "Ole Pompey ken keep secrets; 't ain't de fust time, as Miss Betty knows — dat all, missy?" and he drove away.

Miss Moppet ran up the stairs without stopping to call Miranda, her maid, and slipped off her Indian dress as fast as if she feared Betty would presently walk in the door and question her. But as she threw the yellow domino hastily into the brass-nailed trunk she felt something in the pocket, and remembering the tricolored cockade which she had captured from De Grammont, looked down to see if it were there. To her amazement an antique locket lay in her hand as she drew it out. It was of dull gold, shaped like a shamrock; each leaf was set thickly with small diamonds sunken in the gold, and in the centre a great emerald

which, even to her girlish eyes, was evidently of untold value. The locket was attached to a chain, in which small emeralds alternated with tiny diamonds, the whole being a unique necklet. Miss Moppet turned it over to inspect the back. Yes, there was faint lettering upon it. Breathlessly she held it under the candles in the brass sconces which lit her room, and with some difficulty deciphered the inscription, for it was done in old English script.

"The Luck of Rathcoole," it read.

"I think I must be dreaming!" quoth Miss Moppet.

And then the locket fell from her trembling fingers, and to her own surprise and wrath she burst into tears.

CHAPTER V

Mistress Betty Remembers

A SPANISH grandee doffed his hat, until the plumes thereon swept the floor, to a Venetian dame of the *cinquecento*, but instead of requesting the honor of her hand in the dance he said, in her ear: —

"It is nearly the hour set for unmasking, sweetheart, and I cannot find Miss Moppet, though I encountered Peggy in the hall on the verge of tears, also upon a fruitless quest of the elusive damsel. Have you seen your sister?"

"Not since I left her on entering, but indeed, Geoffrey, you need never fret over Moppet, for with her quick wit she is not likely to have any misadventure."

"But at a masked ball —"

"Even here," returned Mistress Betty, with a gay little laugh, "do not allow your English caution to make you over-anxious. I'll wager at this minute she is teasing some one, or play-

ing a mischievous prank under the protection of her mask and domino, and when the signal is given for supper she will appear, with Philip Van Cortlandt in close attendance as usual. Peggy, did you say? Pray, what was she about? I must go to her rescue if she be without Moppet, for alas! the poor little maid is so shy and unaccustomed to society that I do not doubt this ball has been purgatory to her. And, Geoffrey, continue to be as lover-like as you can while you are whispering in my ear: 't would never do to appear like Darby and Joan — in public."

"I am by no means loath to court you once again," retorted Yorke. "Ah, Betty, my only comfort when you flout me is the reflection —"

"That you have secured me for life," whispered Betty, slipping her hand within his arm. "Have you seen the O'Halloran? 'T is said she wears a yellow domino, but there were three of them in the room at one time; no doubt to cause bewilderment."

"Are you looking for the divine Patrice?" spoke a mask on Betty's left. "Seek her be-

neath the coif of a most lovely and unfortunate Queen."

Betty turned quickly, but only in time to see the back of a tall mountebank going in an opposite direction.

"Now, who can that be?" said Yorke, with a touch of impatience in his tone.

"'T is plainly evident that masked balls are *not* English," said Betty teasingly. "Fie, Geoffrey — the man could easily overhear my speech, and has very possibly given us misleading information in jest."

"'T was an impertinence, nevertheless," returned Yorke, still ruffled. "And his was not an American voice, Betty. There was a touch of our accent, I think."

Betty laughed outright. "I did not perceive it. Indeed, I'll wager that voice has not been long acquainted with these shores — Irish, Geoffrey, Irish, and perhaps one of the O'Halloran's artists who, I am told, accompanied her from London. Have you seen the mask, Mary Stuart, to which he alluded?"

"Aye, and she stands there, Betty, in the blue drawing-room, just beyond the door."

"And that is Madam Apthorpe standing beside her — hark!"

Upon the hum of voices, sounding clear and high, came a long-drawn bugle-note — the signal for unmasking; and then the crowd, masks in hand, simultaneously moved up the hall to greet their hostess, and to be presented in due form to the guest of the evening.

Betty had taken but a few steps, however, when a voice at her elbow caused her to pause.

"Mistress Yorke, Mistress Yorke," whispered Peggy, even now afraid of the laughing crowd. "Oh, may I come with you? I cannot find Moppet, and though Mynheer Van Cortlandt has been most kind, I fear me he is weary of my most provincial self."

"Why provincial?" asked Van Cortlandt, bowing low to Betty. "I have in vain endeavored to persuade Mistress Provoost to dance, and now one must proceed to be presented to the O'Halloran. May I have the honor of a contra-dance with Mistress Provoost after supper?"

"With pleasure," smiled Betty, replying for Peggy in compassion for her shyness, and

thereby receiving a most grateful glance from the blue eyes of the Dutch maiden. "Come with me, Peggy. Why are you so anxious to find Moppet? She cannot be far away, and we are all unmasked and free to see each other."

Now, it chanced that Peggy, having in shy despair partly hidden herself near the door of the front portico, had seen Miss Moppet fly down the steps of the house and take refuge in the chariot. Despite the yellow domino which disguised her, she had recognized Moppet's voice when the mountebank had tried to detain her, and was on the point of screwing her courage up to accost her when Nugent came upon the scene. What she did not see, however, was their joint flight in the chariot, for when she gained the threshold, Pompey had driven away, and the bewildered and disconsolate Peggy was forced to wander back into the ballroom where Philip Van Cortlandt finally found and detected her, even in domino, very much to her surprise but private satisfaction. Here, at least, was a man who had been properly introduced, according to Aunt Anneke and the Albany rules of good manners.

"Betty," said Yorke, returning to her side at the moment, "I have the honor to present to you Monsieur le Comte de Valdemont, just arrived from France in his Majesty's ship, La Touraine, accredited by his Government to bear their congratulations to President Washington."

"May I also present my felicitations to madame," said De Valdemont. "I have the honor to bear a letter to her father, General Wolcott, from the Marquis de Lafayette."

"Which my father will be charmed to receive," Betty answered, to the great delight of the Frenchman, in his own language. "You find us in the midst of our great rejoicing at the elevation of our beloved countryman, General Washington, to be Chief Executive."

"And also, madame, in your rejoicing you pay to my country the compliment of a *bal masqué. Ma foi!* but for the difference in climate I can imagine I am in Paris to-night. I had thought to find the weather cold and bleak; and behold, it is like summer!"

"A promise of one, monsieur; we have these balmy days also in our autumn, when we call

them Indian Summer." Then, seeing the Frenchman's bewildered glance, Betty added, with her charming laugh, "A reminiscence, perhaps, of our aborigines — it is, I think, their time for harvesting. But, monsieur, I trust your engagements, which no doubt are many, will permit your acceptance of my invitation which we dispatched by special messenger this evening to your ship, which I understand is anchored off the Battery, and that you will do us the honor to dine with us to-morrow?"

"Madame, nothing could delight me more!"

"Monsieur le Comte will permit me to add that should there be other officers accompanying him to America it would afford us pleasure to dine them also."

"Madame's graciousness leaves nothing to be desired," returned the gallant De Valdemont, bowing low, as Yorke promptly seconded Betty's invitation. "I think De Grammont has already the honor of your acquaintance, and there remains only my flag-lieutenant, Monsieur Sailly, to whom I will convey your flattering request."

As they spoke, the crowd parted, and Betty

dropped her curtsy to Madam Apthorpe, who said: "Mistress Yorke, I present you to my guest, Mistress O'Halloran, of London town."

"The mountebank spoke advisedly," thought Betty. "What a wonderfully beautiful Mary Stuart! But who is it she reminds me of?"

Patrice O'Halloran, at that time at the height of her fame upon the histrionic boards, was the toast of London, and was by some of her enthusiastic admirers said in personal fascination to resemble Nell Gwyn. Had not Mr. Richard Brinsley Sheridan himself praised her acting of "Lady Teazle," and predicted a career for her as famous as that of Mrs. Bracegirdle? And was it not considered phenomenal that the manager of the John Street Theatre had been able to offer sufficiently golden inducements to secure the engagement of the O'Halloran and her London Company to appear in New York at the time of the Inauguration?

Betty, whom Madam Apthorpe detained at her side, gazed with critical eyes upon the Irish beauty who, somewhat above the average height of women, yet inclined slightly to *embonpoint*, which might later be a blemish but now only

served to increase her loveliness. Her arms and neck were exquisite in shape and color, and her eyes were those best known to her race — deep blue, with long, curling lashes which needed no artificial penciling to enhance their beauty. Her hair (lightened for the evening to sustain the costume she wore) was almost black, and the forehead beneath it ivory white. But Betty, with a woman's unerring instinct, said to herself: "I do not fancy her mouth; 'tis shapely, but I think a trifle cruel, and the lips droop at the corners. No, Mistress O'Halloran; you are beautiful and graceful as a leopard, and perchance can be as treacherous as one. Yet there is a look which reminds me —"

"You cannot think how beautiful the Bay of New York seemed as I beheld it from the deck of the ship;" the tone was soft, and there was a faint echo of the Irish brogue which was fascinating. "Oh, I am already in love with your wonderful new world. What if it should prove too attractive to leave?"

"We should be the happy gainers," returned Geoffrey Yorke gallantly. "Give us but half the

chance and I 'll wager 't would perhaps involve us in fresh war should New York gain and London lose the adored O'Halloran."

"You are pleased to be most flattering, sir," smiled Patrice. "Were you at the theatre to-night?" turning to Betty.

"Unfortunately we could not secure stalls before Thursday," said Betty. "Our playhouse must seem very small and contracted by comparison with those of London."

"But such an audience!" Patrice's eyes sparkled. "'T was an ovation which you charming Americans gave me. The whole house rose to me at the close of the fourth act, and Lady Teazle very nearly caused Mary Stuart to lose this beautiful ball, for I was overlate in arriving at Apthorpe House. I am, good lack! well accustomed to making hasty toilets, but this one had to be completed by my maid as we drove here in the chariot which Madam Apthorpe kindly sent me, and even now I fear me that my left cheek hardly matches my right, as 't was not easy to arrange paint and powder by moonlight."

"Both are irreproachably lovely — your fear

is groundless "— Betty was not to be outdone, even by Irish blarney.

"Faith, madam, such sugar-plums as those you give me are rare from my own sex, and go direct to my heart." The tone was gracious, and the smile dazzling, but again Betty thought swiftly: "The leopard can scratch, betimes— but where have I seen such eyes and hair?"

De Valdemont joined them at the moment, and after greeting the O'Halloran offered his hand to Betty. "I am bidden by Madam Apthorpe to take you to supper," he said, and they moved on, followed by Yorke, who was escorting Peggy in the same direction.

"Have you seen Moppet of late?" asked Yorke, having supplied Peggy with game pie and a glass of old Madeira; "I 'll warrant she is playing some prank, because I was only able to catch one glimpse of her domino (which Betty had shown me by way of precaution), and when I accosted her, as I supposed, lo! a totally strange voice replied, and oddly enough 't was an English cockney accent, which sets me wondering who, in this assembly, could counterfeit so well one of our lower class. I confess

to complete bewilderment, for I'll swear that pink domino had three bows on the left shoulder and was Moppet's."

"I think she may have changed it with somebody," answered Peggy timidly. She wanted to guard Miss Moppet's secret, but she felt that loyalty to her host compelled her to give some excuse for naughty Moppet's escapade.

"'T is extremely probable," said Yorke, laughing, "but that does not account for the English cockney. My curiosity is upon the alert; I must ask Betty's opinion."

"Of what?" asked his wife, at his elbow.

Peggy listened, and as she did so grew more and more frightened; surely it was her bounden duty to inform Betty of her sister's disappearance?

"I don't like to tell, or be a spoil-sport," faltered poor Peggy, when she heard Yorke announce his intention of going to search for the truant maid, "but — but — Mistress Yorke, I certainly did behold Moppet fly down the front portico, and dash inside a chariot, and it drove off — "

"A chariot?" interrupted Betty, somewhat surprised but remembering Peggy's inexperience. "Are you sure?"

"Oh, very, *very* certain, for had I not just overheard a man in a queer dress say rude things to her, and I knew Moppet's voice — and she was properly indignant with him, too!" finished Peggy, with a rather resentful recollection of Moppet's laughter at her ignorance of the ways of masked balls.

"I must see to the matter," said Yorke; "remain here with Peggy, Betty, and I will inquire outside."

Peggy undoubtedly would have gone on with her revelations, and so might have given quick-witted Mistress Betty a clue to her madcap sister's adventures had not a most opportune diversion appeared in the person of Philip Van Cortlandt, who presented her with a nosegay of artificial pinks, which, forming the adornment of a huge frosted cake, were being caught up by the young gallants to serve as souvenirs for their respective partners. And almost as soon as he had disappeared, Yorke returned, and drawing Betty a little aside, whispered: —

"No cause for alarm, sweetheart; I found Pompey, and he told me that Miss Moppet, feeling fatigued, bade him drive her home."

"Home?" said Betty, surprised. "What can have induced her to run off like Cinderella? —Oh! 'tis but one of Moppet's pranks, after all, and I shall rate her soundly for giving me such a fright. Is it not nearly the hour for leaving, Geoffrey?"

"Aye, but I see that Philip, here, is leading Peggy off for the contra-dance, and the child looks mightily well pleased. We will stop for that, sweetheart, if you yourself will be my partner?"

Betty, nothing loath, curtsied deeply with mock ceremony, and they were soon mingling with the gay dancers, at what, after the custom of the day, was almost the final dance. Then at its conclusion, they bade formal good-night to Madam Apthorpe and drove away from a ball which was destined to become historic.

As Mistress Betty was carefully shaking the powder from her pretty curls in the privacy of her own room an hour later, she suddenly

paused to exclaim, half-aloud, to her own reflection in the mirror:—

"I have it! Those blue eyes and blue-black hair belonged to that charming boy who disappeared after the tragedy of the Theatre Royal—dear, handsome, unfortunate Nugent Carmichael."

CHAPTER VI

The Prophecy — 1667

EH *bien*, *mon ami*, you are bettair to-day? you sit in ze air in zis country so complaisant, where you make to have ze wintair keep away, yes?"

Nugent, sitting in a sunny nook under an improvised canvas awning on the deck of La Touraine, where he had ensconced himself, smiled at De Valdemont's desperate struggle with the "*langue terrible*."

"'T is much better said in your tongue than mine," he replied, laughing. "Unless you desire to exercise your English upon my amiable self?"

"*Vraiment!*" De Valdemont slipped into French with an air of relief. "But, you see, *cher* Nugent, that I must perfect myself to the best of my *possible*. Am I not meeting many of your charming compatriots who have no French — except that one *ravissante* dame who has invited me to dine with her — I have not

her name, but she has bestowed herself upon an English husband."

"Geoffrey Yorke," said Nugent; "you met them at the ball at Apthorpe House."

"But yes; and did you not tell me that they are people *très distingués?*"

"None better; the father of Mistress Betty has a long roll of honor attached to his name, beginning with having been one of the Signers of our Declaration of Independence in 1776, and she" — Nugent gave a quick sigh — "I remember seeing her when I was but a lad. She would not know me now — at least, pray Heaven for my own sake, not just at present."

De Valdemont gave Nugent a glance of kindly interest as the involuntary sigh struck his ear, and seated himself beside him.

"We will have the pipes," he said, calling for his servant, who presently appeared with the tobacco tray. "I have not yet heard from you how you contrived to dislocate your shoulder and break your collar-bone, but I swear 't was in defense of some fair dame, *mon preux chevalier.*"

A slight flush shone through the bronze of

Nugent's face, but he shook his head; not even to De Valdemont would he admit the adventures of that night. "I was, as I told you, set upon by footpads, and came off rather better than I expected."

The two men lit their pipes, and sat for a time looking out over the waters of the bay, at the New Jersey hills beyond. Finally Nugent broke the silence.

"My luck seems to change the moment I touch my native shores, De Valdemont. Since I left them, a fugitive, as I have told you, good fortune has been mine, thanks to my gallant captain, John Paul Jones, and he gave me in charge to you, as you know, thinking that 't was time I took up the cudgels in mine own defense to prove that I am not altogether unworthy of esteem. I have come back to uncover what I now believe to have been a most dastardly conspiracy against me by one of my own kin, for in my wanderings I came across evidence thereof. 'T is a somewhat lengthy tale; will you have it?"

"*De tout mon cœur*," cried De Valdemont; "what time better than the present for us

both?" and he gave Nugent's hand a hearty grasp, which was as warmly returned.

"To begin with, De Valdemont, I must own to having for years forsworn my own patronymic — I am, indeed, a Nugent, but I am also Carmichael of Carmichael, a Virginian born and bred upon my father's estates on the banks of the James River. There is an old rhyme made some hundred years ago which, when partly explained, may give you some clue to us. It runs thus (I must give you the English): —

'When Nugent shall with Nugent wed,
A curse shall fall on Rathcoole's head.
When Shamrock and the Thistle twine,
Woe! woe! to those of Nugent's line!
Luck will be lost, and found no more,
Till Green seeks Blue on foreign shore.'

'T is somewhat difficult of translation, but I can tell you enough of the strange incidents to explain the prophecy if not the verse. 'T was made in the days of King Charles the Second, the 'Merry Monarch' of England. At his Court and among the gayest of his chosen friends was Nugent of Rathcoole, or the Nugent don, as the Irish title has it. During the sojourn of Prince Charles in France my ancestor saved

his life by taking in his own shoulder a stab intended for the Prince by a fanatic Roundhead who had followed him from England, and for that service and for his friendship's sake the King desired to give Nugent an earldom. But the Irish don declined it; to him, the Celtic title was far greater than any he could receive at the hands of King Charles."

"Like our house of De Rohan," said the Frenchman, as Nugent paused. "Ah, those were *grands gentilhommes*, our ancestors, *mon cher*. But your prophecy, how came that?"

"The King, anxious to retain Nugent at Court, arranged a marriage for him with a daughter of Lord Wilmot, but although she was fair and the King proposed to give her a dower, Nugent hesitated until his royal master lost patience, and finally told him somewhat sharply that he must decide without further delay. Nugent, craving the King's pardon, replied that affairs of moment recalled him to Ireland before he could marry, and accordingly, with the King's permission, he returned to Rathcoole, his estate in Kildare. There, in secret and by night, he married the beautiful

Mona Nugent, his cousin, and, according to the Church of Rome, within the proscribed degree of consanguinity. The priest, overawed by the Nugent's authority, at his command performed the ceremony, and as the pair left the sacristy where the rite had taken place the ancient crone who had been Mona's nurse barred the way. She cursed them then and there; she banned them, in the Gaelic tongue. 'Blood and disaster shall follow ye: the child born to ye shall be your only one, and to him shall come daughters galore — but one son; and to that son, one daughter, for those of the left hand shall sit higher than those of your body. Beware the Thistle when it twines with the Shamrock, and seek overseas for the luck of Rathcoole.'"

"*Mon Dieu!* Nugent, it makes one shiver to hear. Did the curse fall?"

"Aye; and swiftly, for when after a time news of the marriage reached England, Lord Wilmot, swearing that he would wipe out the insult to his daughter, sent a cartel to the Nugent, and they met on the sands of Dover. The duel was fought and Nugent fell pierced through the heart. The lovely young bride was a widow;

this was the first fruit of the curse. Mona had one only son (born after his father's tragic death), and that son, in turn, had five daughters, all dying in infancy, and then came the son promised by the prophecy. That son, the Nugent don of Rathcoole, a very old man, still living upon his splendid estate in Ireland, is my grandfather."

"Then you are in luck, *mon ami*. Is that the good fortune foretold by the old nurse?"

"Alas, no; you forget the second warning:—

'When Shamrock and the Thistle twine,
Woe, woe! to those of Nugent's line!'"

"'T is too much for my poor wits to fathom," said De Valdemont, with a shrug. "But the romance of it — ah, that is after my own heart. Proceed with the tale."

"My grandfather, twice married, had but one child by his second wife. She was named Mona, after her great-grandmother, and she was the idol of Fitzgerald Nugent's heart. As a young man he had spent much time in London at the Court of George the First, and finally, after the death of her mother, he took Mona there. I have heard that the Irish beauty

was the toast for one brief season, during which she met a young Scotchman, the second son of the Laird of Carmichael, who was about to seek his fortunes in the colonies of America where his father had purchased a tract of land in the province of Virginia. Whether caused by superstitious fear of the prophecy, or a general dislike of the Scotch people, I cannot tell; but when my father pleaded his suit with the Nugent for his daughter's hand, he was met with refusal and scorn of so bitter a kind that the equally proud and haughty Scotch gentleman could not brook the insult, and retorted: 'Ye may gang hame to your castle in Kildare, but the love that Mona bears in her dear heart for me is my own, and I warn ye, Nugent don, by the motto of our Highland clan—"*What I have, I hold.*"' The Nugent swore a mighty oath, and that night summoned his daughter and ordered his household to depart for Rathcoole, but when sought, Mona was not found; she had escaped to the port of Dover, thence by small cutter to Southampton, whence in the good ship Indian Queen she sailed with her newly wedded husband to the New World.

And in her flight she carried with her what to the Nugent was, next herself, his most precious possession: a jewel given the Nugent of King Charles's day by the King, and known as the 'Luck of Rathcoole.'"

"*Pardieu!* it grows! Why have you kept so fine a tale from me? And the — what you call? — the 'Luck,' is it yet here?" In his intense interest De Valdemont's pipe had gone out, and Nugent smiled as the enthusiastic Frenchman laid it down. "But continue, I pray you; what manner of jewel was it?"

"A locket, formed of three leaves; a shamrock set in fine diamonds, and in the centre a great emerald which the King had worn in a ring. No, De Valdemont, the 'Luck' was lost to us after I left America, and I have not yet recovered it."

Nugent hesitated, then resumed his story.

"The romance keeps with me, however, for next comes the adventure I had in Paris a year ago. I was stopping at a small hostelry in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, not far from the gardens of the Palais Royal, when, one morning, as I was sauntering through the gar-

den while awaiting the hour for meeting my captain at the residence of Mr. Benjamin Franklin, my foot struck something on the path, and looking down I saw a small reticule, such as the dames use for handkerchiefs, powder, and patches. I picked it up, and sat me down upon a bench near at hand to examine its contents and perchance find a clue to the owner. It did contain the kerchief and the patches, but also a chain of small diamonds and emeralds combined, and attached to it, lo! the lost locket, the 'Luck of Rathcoole.' As I sat staring at it in my hand, I heard the rustle of a woman's skirt, and a sweet voice said, in French: —

"'Pardon, monsieur; I think you have found the bag for which I am searching. I lost it as I passed along half an hour ago.'

"'But, madame,' I said, springing to my feet and bowing low, 'if the bag belong to you, I must ask where you obtained part of its contents?'

"'Contents, monsieur?' she answered, haughtily. 'You presume, nor am I accountable to any one for mine own property.'

"'Perhaps not, madame; but when I assure

you that the trinket I am now holding is one which I recognize — having seen before — nay, why discuss it, for I can tell you without inspection what is engraved upon the back' — and I repeated aloud the faint line which it bears — "The Luck of Rathcoole" — see, madame; it is inscribed here.'

"'The woman clasped her hands together, and looking at her face I saw her grow deathly pale.

"'But you cannot prove that it is your property,' she said vehemently, although her voice trembled, 'and I, fortunately, can do so.' She was right; unwittingly she had found the joint in my armor, and I was powerless. I dared not give my full name, for, De Valdemont, I fled from America under a cloud — although I have never yet found a proper occasion to tell you so."

"It is not necessary," — De Valdemont's voice was full of affectionate solicitude, — "I know from your captain something of it. That you are the soul of honor I also know from our intimate acquaintance; what would you more?"

"From my soul I thank you!" Nugent's voice broke, and for a moment there was silence.

"Return we to our *moutons*." De Valdemont's eyes sparkled with mischief. "And what said the fair Patrice?"

Nugent laughed outright. "*Touché!*" he cried. "Had you then knowledge of this incident, or have I your quick wit to thank for your recognition of the fair dame?"

"Perhaps a trifle of both. But I will not interrupt you again; I am anxious to hear how you extricated yourself from that dilemma."

"Of course there was nothing for me to do except to maintain my position with what assurance I could summon; so I replied that I would with pleasure attend madame to her hotel, where doubtless she could produce her proofs of ownership, and meantime, I would, with her permission, retain possession of the jewel. For a moment her eyes blazed with anger, and I fully expected to hear her call one of the guards who was pacing the ground not far from us; then, suddenly, something in the situation appealed to her Irish humor, and she turned toward me with an enchanting smile.

Before she could speak, however, I had recognized her; only the night before I had seen that smile upon the boards of the theatre where the O'Halloran was playing to packed houses of your enthusiastic compatriots.

"'Although monsieur's French is nearly perfect,' she said, 'it is plain to be seen that he is English, for no Frenchman would be so ungallant to a lady; therefore, *monsieur l'Anglais*, you may conduct me to my carriage which awaits me at the entrance to the gardens.'

"'But notwithstanding that you attribute to me insular manners,' I returned, dropping at once into my native tongue, 'you mistake my nationality — I am an American.'

"She stopped short on the path.

"'An American? — you!' she cried. 'You called my locket "The Luck of Rathcoole"; — then your name is — '

"'Nugent,' I interrupted. Boldness was my only way of escape."

As Nugent paused, the ship's bell sounded, and a voice at his elbow announced: "Monsieur le Comte, your gig is manned for the shore."

"*Mon Dieu!*" De Valdemont sprang to his feet. "In my intense interest I had forgot the dinner to which I am bidden by *cette charmante madame.* My felicitations upon your — ah!" lapsing into English — "ah! what you call 'checkmate' to ze fair Patrice, an' you tell me ze res' of your ver' extraordinaire story on my return — yes?"

Nugent nodded a quick assent, and De Valdemont disappeared down the companionway as the American, realizing that his shoulder was growing painful, rose to follow him below and consult the ship's surgeon.

CHAPTER VII

De Valdemont creates a Sensation

MISS MOPPET, Miss Moppet, you certainly *is* the most bu-ti-ful lady! You looks like the big picture of my grandmuvver, 'way up in Litchfield Town."

"I appreciate the compliment, Noll, but how in the world can you recollect the portrait? You were such a very little fellow when last you saw it."

Before a long cheval glass stood Miss Moppet, and beside her, gazing with rapture upon her glories of flowered satin, laces, and pale yellow roses, was tiny Oliver Wolcott, best known as "Noll," her little nephew. He had never been able to conquer the letters "th" in her name, therefore the more dignified title gave place to the household nickname by which Faith Walcott had always been known since the days (not so long ago) of her roguish childhood.

"Oh, but you forget, muvver an' Molly an'

I came to the manor this summer from Goshen for one night, an' I took Molly downstairs an' stood her up in front of the picture, an' I telled her the story 'bout grandmuvver an' the old Indian, an' Molly was scared, an' cried, 'cause she was a girl."

"Noll, Noll, girls are just as brave as boys, although they may not wear uniforms or have a little sword, as you did at the Inauguration."

"Yes," said Noll proudly, laying his hand on the side of his small person where that weapon belonged. "It *was* a fine sword, was it not? And I tried, ever so hard, not to cry when I went over the balcony. You don't fink," anxiously, "do you, that I disgraced my uniform, 'cause I went head first?"

"Disgrace it? Never! A Wolcott could n't;" Miss Moppet's voice was as grave as the question warranted, even if her eyes twinkled mischievously over his head. "Do you think I need another rose here?" — indicating her left ear, — "or a lace lappet — stay, I have one in my trunk;" and leaving Oliver to study his reflection in the glass, she ran across the room and plunging down into the brass-nailed trunk

presently emerged triumphantly therefrom, lace in hand.

"Miss Moppet, I like the rose bes'." Noll, in the habit of being consulted, in half-laughing fashion, by his mother, was wont to take such remarks with convincing gravity, which afforded joy to the souls of both mother and aunt.

"I agree with you," said Miss Moppet, tossing the lace on her bed, and adjusting the rose against her pretty ear. "The lace gives me an air of Aunt Euphemia, which, Heaven save us! I do not desire for these many years to come."

Noll made no answer for the moment. His active mind had gone back to his adventures on the balcony, which, as yet, he had had no opportunity of discussing with Miss Moppet.

"You see," he remarked, watching her put on her long white mitts, "you can never tell when accidents are about to happen, an' that nice kind gentleman caught me so quickly that I had no chance to see how the lanterns looked upside down. Wish I had had time to see," sighing regretfully. "Oh, Miss Moppet,

he had such big blue eyes, an' a funny queer scar on his left hand."

"How could you see that?" asked Miss Moppet, her thoughts flying off to another pair of deep blue eyes which had haunted her dreams of late.

"Why, going down the post, of course; the scar was shaped like a letter; the one you say I never remember. I fink favver should look about for that gentleman; nobody *ever* fanked him;" and the little lips quivered as Noll fixed his eyes on hers.

"That 's my own gracious little gentleman," said Miss Moppet, clasping him in her arms with a kiss. "We will find him, some day, Noll, if I have to hunt for him my own self, and so clear the Wolcott name of ingratitude for saving its dearest member. Now, dear, I have to go down, for 't is nearly the hour for our guests to assemble; but if you wish to stop here for a while before Chloe comes to put you abed, you may play with my trinkets on the dresser, in the little dish; here is a string of beads which will make you appear like an Indian brave;" and she playfully threw

them over his head, kissed her hand, and flitted out of the door, which she closed behind her.

Left to himself, Noll cavorted up and down before the cheval glass, talking in a low voice, and imagining things after the manner of all children. Suddenly he bethought himself that it would be more agreeable to have Molly assist his imagination.

"No, Molly 's gone to bed," he said, stopping on his way to the door, and taking a seat on the brass-nailed trunk, whose flat top made an excellent and familiar resting-place. "An' Chloe 's down in the kitchen helping serve the dinner. I 'll play this is my sleigh, an' we 're going up to Albany," kicking his heels with a clatter; "wish I could move it out a bit; I 'll get behind an' see if I can't" — clambering over it.

But the trunk was too heavy, and with a sigh of disappointment he was about to give up his effort and return to playing "Indian," when his eye caught a glitter of something lying on the floor between the trunk and the window under which it stood. Noll picked up

the sparkling object and inspected it with eyes that opened wider and wider.

"It's an — oh! what is it the generals and big, big officers wear — all pinned on, so — " He ran over to the cheval glass and held the ornament up on his little coat, near the shoulder. "Oh! what a great green eye in the middle of it! It's *jus'* what I need for my uniform. Miss Moppet will never miss it — girls don't wear such fings. Perhaps she has forgotten all about it — " Noll's conscience pricked him as he said this, but the glittering object was too fascinating a prize to be relinquished, at least until the effect of seeing it on his treasured uniform had been tried. "I can tuck it in the funny little place in grandmuvver's old desk that muvver showed me one day, until nex' time I wear my uniform — How Miss Moppet will laugh when she sees me wear it!"

Very quietly Noll opened the door of the room and peered out into the hall. He could hear the sound of voices in the drawing-room below, and the footsteps of servants in the dining-room beyond it. So he stole softly down the hall where stood an old mahogany secre-

tary, of the colonial pattern, inside which was the secret drawer which his little inquisitive fingers had found while Mistress Betty was writing a letter. Up he climbed on a convenient chair, pulled open the "funny little place," and down slid the "Luck of Rathcoole," in secure hiding, as Chloe's portly form appeared at the head of the staircase, and triumphant in his naughty behavior, the small sinner, unsuspected and undiscovered, was taken up in his faithful black mammy's arms and consigned to bed.

In Mistress Betty's dining-room was set a large table, and a most dignified company surrounded it. There were the Livingstons, Rutgers, and Van Cortlandts, together with the De Peysters and Verplancks. The four officers accompanying De Valdemont were resplendent in French uniforms, and Oliver Wolcott wore his "Buff and Blue" as bravely as when he rode with his Connecticut troops the day the British evacuated New York. It was a company of twenty-four, and near Geoffrey Yorke sat a most imposing figure. He wore the satin small-clothes and carried the cocked hat of the

civilian, but no officer of them all bore a more distinctly military air. His silver hair was brushed back off a high, noble forehead and commanding brow, and the dark eyes which usually glowed with somewhat sombre fire, but were now smiling kindly upon Betty Yorke, belonged to Colin Carmichael, of Carmichael Hall, the largest plantation upon the banks of the James. For years he had been a recluse because (it was whispered) of family reasons, but the Inauguration of General Washington had called him back to the scenes he had once known so well, and the Wolcotts were among his oldest and best friends in New York.

Peggy Provoost, seated demurely beside Philip Van Cortlandt, was listening with downcast lids to his somewhat florid speeches, but keeping a quiet record of Miss Moppet's gay sallies as she sat with De Valdemont on one side and De Grammont on the other, halfway down the board. Peggy had not yet dared to question Moppet, or even to mention the fact that she had seen her flight down the portico of Apthorpe House; but her curiosity was still burning within her, only waiting some chance

word from that mischievous maid to set it in active motion.

Gay badinage flew fast and furious between the two French officers, and was handed down that side of the table, for Betty, with the discretion of a wise hostess, had placed the older guests opposite, and among these latter a discussion was going on concerning the O'Halloran and the gossip about her.

"There is no denying the charm of her acting," said Mistress Van Cortlandt to her neighbor, Diedrich Verplanck, "and I know from my correspondents in London that some of the Court circle have gone so far as to have Mistress O'Halloran at their tables, although they do say there was reason for that."

"Ah, yes," mumbled Mr. Verplanck, an inveterate gossip of seventy years. "I heard somewhat of it at the King's Arms' Tavern last evening when we had a meeting of our old Committee of Vigilance."

"You will be obliged to confine the Vigilance to our morals instead of our politics," retorted the dame, laughing. "And pray, what did you hear there?"

"Among other information that the lady is somewhat closely connected with the nobility — on the left hand — hum — hum —" When Mr. Verplanck was engaged with a toothsome morsel it was difficult to understand him, but Mistress Van Cortlandt persevered.

"Indeed! And was the bar sinister very high up? Perhaps she has more than one point of resemblance to Mistress Nell Gwyn!"

"No, no; not so far as royalty, but my informant hinted that a patent of nobility had been bestowed upon a near relative of hers."

"Of *this* generation?" asked Mistress Rutgers, upon the other hand of Mr. Verplanck. "I was told it was her great-grandfather who was so honored, and what 's more, that it was an Irish patent, to which, 't is plain to be seen, the actress can claim kin, from her touch of the brogue."

"At the same time," added Mistress Van Cortlandt quickly, "Madam Apthorpe would not have gone so far as to give that grand ball in her honor had not the O'Halloran been, *herself*, quite *comme il faut*, although I must

grant that we Whigs are somewhat more particular than the Tories."

"Tut, tut, my dear lady." Mr. Verplanck was quite willing to fling a good-sized stone at the actress, but balked at a very small pebble where Apthorpe House was concerned. "I think we can all trust to Madam Apthorpe's discretion. Be assured she knew the young woman to be personally worthy of her acquaintance, no matter what we hear of the great-grandfather."

While gossip was going down the board, Geoffrey Yorke at his end of the table was plunged into a discussion of quite another character, partly because of the French navy officers, and also that Oliver Wolcott had been questioning De Valdemont in regard to one of the most dashing figures of the War of Independence — Captain John Paul Jones.

"I was told, Monsieur le Comte," he said, leaning across the table to address him, "that Captain Jones is now in Paris. Can you inform me whether that news be true?"

"He was there, monsieur," returned De Valdemont, "for just before sailing I had the honor to meet him at dinner at the table of the Mar-

quis de Lafayette, having returned from the Black Sea, where, as you of course are aware, he commanded a vessel in the fleet of Admiral Potemkin."

"I have always thought that our Congress has been most ungrateful to that brave and gallant officer," said Oliver Wolcott.

"And I agree with you," chimed in Yorke. "Never was there a more heroic victory than his combat with the Serapis, though, indeed," he added with a laugh, "I am most virtuous in my praise as, from my English point of view, I should regret the outcome."

"Ah, Yorke, you appreciate heroism wherever and whenever you find it."

It was Colin Carmichael who spoke, and De Valdemont turned toward him at once. In the formal introductions which followed his entrance that evening he had not understood the names of several of the guests, and was, therefore, totally unaware of Carmichael's identity, but he had been greatly struck by the appearance of the fine old man, and eagerly accepted the opportunity of a few moments' conversation with him.

"Monsieur also perhaps has the acquaintance of le Capitaine Jones?" he asked, speaking in English, for with Miss Moppet and Yorke he had used his own tongue.

"I am so fortunate, but it is some years since we have met, and I shall welcome any news of him," returned Carmichael. Then, with a kindly smile which lit up his melancholy face, "It will give me great pleasure if Monsieur le Comte will employ his own charming language, for in days gone by it was one familiar to me."

"A thousand thanks, monsieur. It enchants me to find so many of the Americans who speak my tongue. But if I accept the courtesy you all generously extend, how then will I ever learn to speak your wonderful, but alas! so difficult language?"

"From the ladies," said Carmichael, with a gallant bow to Miss Moppet, whose smiling eyes were challenging him across the table. "*Place aux dames*, Monsieur le Comte, in this, as in many other situations of life."

"I perceive that we Frenchmen must look to our laurels in the language of compliment when we meet in America."

Carmichael smiled, but a shade passed over his face.

"Like many another citizen of the United States I am not an American born," he said.

"Neither was our friend, Paul Jones, monsieur, although he has long been accustomed to style himself as one. And à propos, the last time we met he related to me a story of a young American — a story of heroism which perhaps it may please you and my host to hear."

"We shall be charmed to listen," said Yorke, courteously.

"The young American, who afterwards joined John Paul Jones, was then on board the American frigate Alliance, commanded by Captain John Barry, when one day the look-out discovered two other vessels bearing down upon them. They proved to be English, a sloop-of-war and a brig. They were sighted at night, and on the following morning a dead calm prevailed, but after six hours of weary work with the sweeps the enemy approached near enough to begin action. Then ensued a furious fight, in which the becalmed frigate was nearly helpless because, having a vessel

on either side of her, the English could pour broadsides upon both quarters, while the American could only respond with a few of her aftermost guns. Matters began to look very black, indeed, for the Alliance, as each broadside took dire effect, and the American sailors were beaten back dismayed from their guns just as a well-aimed shot tore away their colors. The British seamen cheered lustily, thinking the victory won. But as the ensign dropped to the deck, which was by that time a charnel-house, our young American sprang forward and seized it, and climbing up the rigging, a mark for every sharpshooter on the British ships, finally reached the torn halliards. Amid the enemy's unceasing fire he contrived to lash the flag in place. Officers and men below, who had watched the incident in breathless suspense, sent up a ringing cheer as they saw their beloved flag once more aloft. It was the turning-point in the fight. A breeze had sprung up, and the frigate once again answered her helm. The sailors, inspired by their comrade's heroism, sent broadside after broadside crashing into the British ships, and victory was snatched

from defeat as the British flags fluttered to their decks in surrender."

"And the gallant young fellow?" cried Yorke, as De Valdemont paused.

"He escaped, monsieur, with his life, although desperately wounded. Paul Jones told the story with an enthusiasm which, perhaps, I have failed to convey."

"By no means," said Carmichael, leaning forward as he spoke. "General Washington should hear of this; 'tis only fitting that Congress take note of such gallantry. Monsieur le Comte, can you give me the name of that brave young man?"

De Valdemont hesitated for a brief second. Then he said quietly, "His name, monsieur? 'T is one we of France, and also our neighbors across the channel, know full well — Nugent Carmichael."

A gasping cry, followed by a choking sob, broke from Colin Carmichael. Then he fell senseless from his chair to the floor.

CHAPTER VIII

When Thieves fall out

I TELL you, for the third time, Patrice, the 'Luck' *must* be found; can you not appreciate that I am in no mood for trifling?"

"You are that same, Kerry; small doubt of you. And as you are apparently working yourself up into one of your rages, perhaps you will be so very kind as to inform me, sir, how you expect me to go to work to find that exceedingly important and very troublesome jewel? Faith, I am not at your beck and call; but I have a very neat little programme of me own which I intend to carry out."

The theatre was crowded to its utmost, as it had been every night since the O'Halloran's arrival in New York, and Patrice was standing at the "R. U. E." (as the play-book had it) waiting for her cue to go on in the last scene of the "School for Scandal." And very beautiful she looked, with her lovely head thrown defiantly in the air, and her mutinous blue eyes

blazing wrathfully upon the man who stood beside her.

"I make no doubt of your programme, but its chief interest to me centres in whether it furthers *my* plans."

"Small shame you have, to acknowledge your selfishness; you do not even take pains to clothe its skeleton with a scant display of your affection for my most unworthy self."

"Patrice!" A deep red flush rushed over the face and brow of the man. "You know well how to torment, and also you know — yes, *know*, that my every effort to obtain Rathcoole and the Nugent's fortune is that I may lay it all, together with my heart, at your feet."

"I had thought your heart had been in that lowly position for some time, sir; methinks you placed it there one night in Paris. But why should we quarrel at this late day? I am bidden to supper after the play with the officers of La Touraine at the King's Arms, and I do not wish to arrive there with ruffled temper. And, Kerry, I told you that Dopple, my maid, swears that the packet containing the Luck, which she carefully placed in the pocket of my domino,

was not found there; but although we both have searched every possible nook and cranny of my room and hers, as yet there is no trace of it."

"And, I repeat, that Dopple is lying, for when I accosted the other yellow domino with which you had provided her it was not — "

"Call — Mistress O'Halloran — call — " came a voice from the side, and a distracted stage-manager rushed frantically upon them. "The stage waits."

Patrice had but time for a hasty word — "Await me in my dressing-room" — before she fled, and the next moment was heard greeting Sir Peter Teazle on the boards.

Kerry stood for a few minutes in the flies, and then sauntered quietly back in the direction of the Green Room. No one paid attention to him, for he was often at the London Theatre behind the scenes, and the Company knew him as one of the O'Halloran's train of lovers; therefore, when he appeared in New York, having followed her to America, he had excited no remark among them. But as he came upon a set of scene-shifters, who moved respectfully

aside, he did not see an old man, who, with great agility for one of his years, darted back behind a set scene as Kerry crossed the stage and remained watching him out of sight.

"'T is surely he. I 'll not forget that swarthy face and those sinister eyes," whispered old Nicholas Staats to himself. "I 'll wager he was head-devil in that fight. If I could but find the young master whom I met at the coffee-house the morning of Inauguration Day, I would warn him. Yet why should I meddle, for he bade me be silent, and very like may be already aware of yonder man's presence in New York."

Kerry was about to enter the Green Room when a woman came hastily out of the door, and, seeing him, turned to fly in another direction, but he caught her arm.

"I was about to look for you, Dopple. Why do you persist in the falsehood that you know nothing of that packet which was given you for safe-keeping the night of the ball at Apthorpe House?"

"It belongs to my mistress," said the woman sullenly. "You promised to pay me if I would

deliver it to you. I kept my word, for I put it in the pocket of one of the yellow dominos —"

"Which *you* did not wear," interrupted Kerry. "I met that domino, but it was not you inside it. Unless you confess that you are holding the packet to obtain more money from me, I will inform your mistress that you exchanged dominos with some one, and thereby are treacherous to us both."

The woman turned on him like a fury.

"And what if *I* tell my mistress that Mr. Fitzgerald has bribed me to give him her property — for 't was you, sir, gave that locket to her —" She stopped, trembling at the look in Kerry's eyes.

"So you know the contents of the packet? Very well — if so, you spied, and how long do you suppose your mistress will retain you in her employ when she knows from me that you are untrustworthy?"

Dopple dropped her eyes — she heard the applause of the audience and knew that another moment would bring the O'Halloran behind the scenes.

"I beg pardon, sir," she said humbly; "I forgot myself — I will not offend again. I will try my best to find it."

Kerry slipped a coin in her hand as a voice behind them said: —

"Wait for me in the Green Room, Kerry; Dopple has to make a quick toilet for me, and if you will promise to be very good you may escort me in my chariot to the King's Arms."

The quick toilet consumed more time than Kerry imagined, for it was more than half an hour before Patrice returned to the Green Room, and he was obliged to nurse his wrath, which did not tend to improve either his language or his manners. Therefore, when the fair lady requested him to take her to the chariot awaiting them, he walked beside her in silence, and having handed her inside took his seat.

"Well, sir," demanded Patrice, after proceeding in silence a short distance, "why are you in the sulks? It seems a more fitting mood for me than you, and one that I cannot permit."

"Are you ever going to be reasonable — who the devil can understand a woman?"

"Evidently not Gerald Kerry Fitzgerald, onetime Lord — Take care, sir!" for he had seized her arm with some violence — "or I will scream and summon the watch!"

Kerry threw himself back into his corner, speechless for once, and at the mercy of her pitiless tongue.

"Now, listen," said the O'Halloran, after a brief silence. "You have to-night provoked me past my patience or I had not uttered that gibe. For, indeed, you know that I think your case a hard one, and I am, and have been, willing to obtain the Nugent's money for you. But you must let me do it in my own way, and, mark me, no violence, Kerry; there has been enough of that in the past. That the 'Luck' has disappeared for the moment is, I grant, a misfortune; but, as you know, it invariably comes back —"

"A fig for your optimism," cried Kerry. "Comes back — aye, to our branch only because I stole it from Colin Carmichael — that is" — stumbling in his unwary speech —

"'t was put by accident through a servant's blunder in my dispatch-box—"

"And you availed yourself of the *very* fortunate *contre-temps!* I compliment you upon your foresight. I have always been curious to know how it passed into your hands."

"It would be better if it had never left them," he said ungraciously.

"Kerry, repeat to me again what the Nugent said the last time you met. I know that there is some family secret connected with the jewel, but you are ever vague in regard to it. When you gave it to me you only said 't was for safeguard, as you feared it might be stolen from you."

"The Nugent don is now a very old man, and full of superstition regarding the 'Luck.' But for its theft when his daughter, Mona, eloped with Colin Carmichael, he would have forgiven her. Advices have reached me from Ireland that his anxiety to once more possess the jewel has gone so far that he has sworn to bequeath his entire large private fortune to whoever, bearing the name of Nugent, can produce the 'Luck.' But to me that would be

destruction, for without money how am I ever to prosecute my claim to the earldom of which I have been so unjustly deprived, and, I swear, *nothing* shall stand between me and its possible attainment."

The chariot turned the corner of Little Prince Street.

"Drive on, up Broadway until I bid you return," directed Kerry to the sable individual on the box. "Give me a few more minutes, Patrice—"

"I will," she replied gently. "But do not detain me long, else my Frenchmen will wax impatient."

Kerry, keen and subtle, saw that her mood was softening, and went on rapidly: "To obtain the jewel seems the key-stone of my desires. Who like your lovely self would queen it in London and Dublin when you wear the tiara of a countess? Even your histrionic triumphs would pale, and you do not need the assurance that I am and always will be your adoring slave."

He pressed a passionate kiss upon the cheek nearest him, but Patrice leaned back against

the seat of the chariot unresponsive. Again she heard another voice, which rang as true as steel, say: "Do not fail me; I trust you." — Why, oh, why was she thus torn between the two passions — love and ambition?

"Kerry, you have my promise; I will make every effort in my power to aid you; but how and where am I to look for that missing jewel?"

"Dopple knows — I am convinced of her treachery and double-dealing. Until to-morrow I will be patient." He leaned forward and gave the order to drive to the King's Arms, and they swung rapidly back to Crown Street. As they drew up before the door of the well-known tavern, then the fashionable resort of New York, with its flower-gardens which ran down to the river, its broad piazza,[1] and its admirable staff of negro cooks, De Valdemont came down the steps to meet the O'Halloran.

"You find us in despair, mademoiselle," he said, as she descended. "We feared some accident had detained you."

"Monsieur le Comte, permit me to make you

[1] For this description of King's Arms Tavern, see *A Tour Around New York*, by J. F. Mines, LL.D.

acquainted with Mr. Fitzgerald — Comte de Valdemont, captain of His Majesty's Ship, La Touraine," Patrice interpolated, as Kerry quickly raised his cocked hat in leave-taking.

"I think I have met monsieur — in Paris," said De Valdemont dryly.

CHAPTER IX

Noll becomes Master of Ceremonies

MISS MOPPET laid down her pen and regarded the pile of notes at her elbow with a somewhat perplexed air.

"There is no immediate haste," she said aloud, "and Betty would not wish me to send the remainder on different paper. I think I will lay the others by and go down to the stationer's and order more. The day is fine and a brisk walk will bring me back in time to dress and pay visits with Peggy."

"Is you going out? Oh, Miss Moppet, *do* take us. Molly an' me is jus' tired sitting on the floor, an' our legs need stretching — that's what Chloe says when we want to stay in the house an' she wants to talk to the watchman down at the corner."

Having delivered this remark, Noll drew himself up and stood at attention, while Molly scrambled over the brass tongs, with which she had been poking an imaginary fire in the empty

hearth, and bestowed a coaxing kiss upon her laughing relative.

"You must keep an eye upon Chloe and the watchman, Noll. Yes, although I think those legs of yours have been especially active this morning, you are very good to keep quiet while I am writing notes, so run along and get your caps. I will meet you in the hall below."

Molly and Noll, who bore the outward semblance of twin angels, and were, in reality, a pair of mischievous imps, irresistible because of their lovableness and the height and breadth of their imaginations, flew to the nursery, where the much-enduring Chloe rescued Molly's quaint little Dutch cap from the head of her rag doll, and found Noll's best hat decorating the fire-dog. Having restored their hands and faces to the proper state of cleanliness, Chloe took each child by the hand and delivered her charges safely at the foot of the staircase; as Noll was wont to reach the lower hall by sliding down the mahogany balustrade, and as Molly had been, fortunately, caught in an attempt and rescued from following him, Chloe felt that due precautions of this kind were necessary.

Miss Moppet was bound for the little shop on the corner of William Street and Broadway, where a crusty old Scotchman named Macben kept the best and finest paper and pens, the latter of which he made with his own hands, adjusting the point of the quill either fine or broad, according to the wants of his customer. It was not a long walk, and ordinarily Miss Moppet would have tripped it quickly; but to-day not only were the children keeping up a rapid cross-fire of conversation and questions, but it appeared as if all the world were astir, and many of her acquaintances and friends were abroad on various errands. Then, driving in an open coach and four, came President Washington, with Madam Washington, wearing a white bonnet and beautiful lace veil, at his side, and Moppet and the children stood at the roadway as they passed, Miss Moppet to execute her prettiest curtsy, and Noll his best salute ("Like Farver," he explained to Molly, who gave such a comically low bob that she nearly tumbled over, hitting her pretty little nose on Noll's shoulder in her haste). But finally the stationer's shop was reached, and the children stopped for

a moment to look in the window where were, joy of joys, some gayly-colored knitted balls, and a funny paper doll dressed in pink paper frills.

"Oh, Miss Moppet, can we — may we jus' take *one* in our hands?"

"One — and the pink dolly?" chanted the pair.

"Come inside and we 'll ask Mr. Macben," laughed Miss Moppet, stepping over the threshold.

The shop seemed empty; only the queer little Scotchman who stood rubbing his hands behind the counter, and a tall man who was looking at a book which he had taken from a shelf at the very back of the shop.

"Good-morning," said Miss Moppet. "I have come to ask you, Mr. Macben, if you can supply me with more of the paper you bought when the last merchant ship came in? It was pale blue, and much the mode, I am told."

"Miss Moppet, may we look at the red balls —"

"An' the dolly —" cried the juvenile chorus.

"Have patience, children; I must first see

the paper which Mr. Macben is taking down off the shelf."

"Miss Moppet," the eager little hand pulled her flowered petticoat. "See! the balls are up there; may I ask the gentleman yonder to hand me down one?"

"The pale blue paper, mistress," said Macben, "I canna say for certain, but I speir I had anither lot-o' it. It wad be on the second shelf; if not, 't is in the bedchamber above."

The old man adjusted his horn spectacles and ran his hand slowly along the various boxes and packages thereon, carefully reading the names and numbers on each as he did so. Noll, considering that Miss Moppet's silence gave him consent to accost the stranger, trotted to his side, and presently his little shrill treble was heard from the back of the shop.

"If you please, sir, will you be so gracious, and hand a ball down to me—" Then, with sudden change of voice, "Miss Moppet! Miss Moppet! Here is my kind gentleman who catched me in his arms and carried me down the post— Come quick an' fank him ever so much for Farver, an' Muvver, an' all of us.

Nobody fanked you that day, you know, sir, 'cause you ran away so fas'."

Nugent bent down as the little hand was thrust confidingly in his. "It was nothing," he began, when his eye fell upon Miss Moppet's graceful form as she came rapidly toward him.

"I beg you, sir, to excuse my little nephew's forwardness."

Surely he knew that sweet, laughing voice — had he not dreamed of it day and night. Then, as the soft gray eyes were lifted to his, — "The Indian Princess!" he cried, beneath his breath; but she caught the words, and a charming blush crept over her cheeks and she dropped her eyes before the glowing ones that met them. Only Noll was equal to the occasion, and pushing Molly, who had followed him, gently aside, he said in his best company manner, standing very straight, with a wave of his tiny hand, —

"I present you to my bu-ti-ful aunt, Miss Moppet; an' your name, sir, —" hesitating in his speech.

"Is Monsieur l'Inconnu." Nugent's laughing eyes sought hers.

"Mr. Inky-New," — nothing daunted, Noll pursued his own idea of a properly conducted introduction, — "we is very happy to meet you, an' vis is my sister, Molly; an', oh!" — a fresh burst of anxiety — "what *is* the matter wif your arm? Did you hurt it when you fetched me down the post?"

But for a moment Noll got no reply; then Miss Moppet, with her most mischievous dimple in evidence, said rapidly in French: "It is evidently monsieur's mission in America to rescue the members of my family. Nay," as his eyes fell, "I did but jest. Sometimes one laughs because otherwise one would weep. Tell me, I beseech you, how grave is the injury that befell you when you fought so gallantly for me?"

"The blue paper is not upon my shelf, mistress," said the old Scotchman behind them; "and if it please you to wait, I will go up and search in the room above. Does the little boy wish a red ball? Here it is; sit ye down on the floor yonder and play with it," and he tossed the ball to the children. There was a shrewd twinkle in the old man's eye as he left the shop,

but it was lost on the pair who stood looking eagerly at each other.

"I only gave my shoulder a wrench (really, 't is nothing), and I have my arm as you see in a sling because my collar-bone suffered, so I escaped very easily," said Nugent, smiling, but retaining in his the little hand she impulsively extended. "And you, mademoiselle, are you well and happy, and did you feel no ill effect from our adventure?"

"I think you are more hurt than you admit, monsieur. I am most glad to meet you to-day because such a strange thing befell after I left you on Broadway that night."

"Surely no other misadventure?" — anxiously. "I did not suggest accompanying you home because I feared that you might think I desired to penetrate your incognito, but if anything untoward did occur, I shall not cease to blame myself."

"No, no, I came in safety. To my surprise, and I must admit, somewhat to my annoyance, I find myself the possessor of several articles which do not belong to me. I cannot retain them, and — in short, monsieur, you are the

only person who knows aught of my adventures that night, which is why I am confiding my dilemma to you."

"I am most fortunate, and, may I add, more than happy to be so honored."

"You do not know, monsieur, and perhaps I should take blame to myself that I entered quite so fully into the spirit of a masked ball; but I must explain that my wearing the yellow domino which you recognized was not altogether my fault. Some one had escaped in mine, which was pink, and I had put on the yellow one in haste before I realized that it had changed color and was not my own."

"Surely that was no crime?" He smiled at her wistful look and troubled air.

"Ah, but hear what followed. When I took off the yellow domino in my room there was something in its pocket—" Nugent gave a quick exclamation. "You remember, monsieur, you had an appointment with the yellow domino?"

"I had, yes."

"What I found was a small packet. I opened it, as perhaps I should not have done, but, be-

lieve me, it was not from curiosity so much as to ascertain a clue to the owner of the domino. Inside was a beautiful antique locket, shaped like a shamrock with a great emerald in the centre."

"The 'Luck of Rathcoole'! Was ever such good fortune vouchsafed me!"

"Then is it perhaps yours?" Miss Moppet's tone was one of pure delight. Had she obtained accidentally something of value to this charming and mysterious stranger?

"Forgive me, monsieur, and do not imagine that I am seeking to penetrate what you may wish to withhold, but you certainly mentioned the name of the lady who you supposed wore the yellow domino, and had I not, fortunately, met you to-day, I was at the point of returning it and the locket to Mistress O'Halloran."

"God forbid!" cried Nugent fervently. "You would have all unconsciously done me the greatest harm, for the jewel is one of the most important links in the chain of events which brought me to America, and I owe its rescue to your dear hand — forgive me if I am over-bold, but I dream of you day and night."

"Here is the needful paper, mistress." Old Macben was standing respectfully at the counter when his voice reached them.

"One moment," said Nugent, "the lady will complete her errand presently." Then back into French again, "Will you keep the 'Luck' until we next meet? As I have explained to you, for a short time I am unable to seek you in my own proper person, nor have you given me permission to do so. But do you ever walk out over the Lispenard Meadows, along the Minetta Water? There is a pretty nook there just off the path where stands a clump of trees. Will you do me the great honor to meet me there the second day from now? Do not fear to accord me this grace —"

"Monsieur, I have no fear," said Miss Moppet proudly. "I will come and fetch the jewel, but I cannot now appoint an hour. And — and" — dropping her eyes demurely, while the naughty dimple lurked in her cheek — "Monsieur forgets; he has not given me his address."

"Nor mademoiselle hers," was the quick retort.

"Confidence for confidence, Monsieur — 'Inky-New'!"

Nugent could not restrain his laughter.

"I have to thank your fascinating little soldier for a novel *nom de guerre*. 'Monsieur l'Inconnu' will serve if sent here to Macben, who can be trusted." Then, drawing a step nearer, he said, low and passionately, "Do not deem me unconscious of your great goodness and condescension to an unknown stranger. Until I can stand before you in mine own proper person, honor forbids my lips to speak the language of my heart; alas, perhaps I have already said too much. Will you trust me — still?"

But Miss Moppet only blushed rosy red as she gave him her hand, which Nugent raised to his lips. Then she turned swiftly from him and walked back to the counter where Macben stood waiting her pleasure.

CHAPTER X

Plot and Counterplot

IN the early days of the Republic it was the mode in New York to have the best and most fashionable lodgings over some well-known shop in a highly respectable neighborhood, and over these shops were various signs, each trying to outdo the other in point of high-sounding appellations. Therefore, when it became a question of lodging Mistress O'Halloran her stage-manager selected a house on Great Queen Street, wherein were sold dry goods and East India stuffs under the "Sign of the Rose and Crown." The manager considered this especially appropriate to the housing of the most distinguished member of his London company, and so bespoke for her a "suite of four rooms, one clothes-press, also two cupboards," as the quaintly worded advertisement ran in the "New York Weekly Mirror."

Dopple, the O'Halloran's maid, had tiptoed twice to the door of her bedchamber before

the fair dame responded to the swish of her petticoats by sleepily remarking: "If you cross the floor again in that pussy-cat manner, Dopple, I shall scream, and alarm the shoppers below. As you are evidently determined to have me rise, whether I will or no, fetch me my cup of chocolate and some of that curious yellow bread of cornmeal which these negroes make so toothsome, and bid the garçon — oh! I forget, we are not in Paris — fetch cold water for my dip, and I'll take it presently. Why do you stand looking at me? Is my nightcap less becoming than formerly?"

"No, madam," replied Dopple, with great haste. "But I think you must have forgotten that Mr. Fitzgerald is coming to breakfast with you at eleven, and 't is just gone the quarter before ten."

"Fly! Dopple, fly! if that be the case; and give me my mail which I see lying there beside my paduasoy," said Patrice, climbing down from her four-post bed and thrusting her feet into velvet slippers as Dopple presented her with two letters and laid the blue paduasoy over her shoulders.

"Hum," mused Patrice, as she inspected the letters after the manner of women before breaking the seals; "this is a ship letter, and this — unless I mistake — this other is from my *héros de roman*, which I had best read and destroy before Kerry arrives, lest by some mischance it fall into his unsparing hands. Oh!" — glancing down the page — "he has met with a mishap and injured his shoulder, which prevents his waiting upon me for a few days. Now, what can have occurred, for on the night of the ball Dopple swears she saw him dancing on the lawn at Apthorpe House with a mask in what Dopple calls the 'houtlandish garb of a hinjun, all beads and feathers.' I will ask Madam Apthorpe this very day which of her guests wore that costume, for 't is passing strange that, having made an appointment with me for that evening, he should fail to keep it. Yet how I could have kept my word and delivered the 'Luck' to him on that occasion is more than my poor wits can discover, as Dopple must have lost that wandering jewel on the way to the ball. Could there have been a third yellow domino there? Heaven save us!

't is as bad as the maze at Rosamond's Bower, with a clue here, and a thread there, — I am ready to vow I'll have none of it unless — Dopple," — aloud, — "set the chocolate here at my elbow and lay out my pale blue taffety slip; the one that came last from Paris."

Half an hour later, Kerry Fitzgerald entered the small parlor and found a lovely hostess who, seated on a *chaise longue* which she had calmly appropriated from the property man at the theatre, gave him her hand to kiss, and smiled approvingly at the bunch of lilies he presented to her.

"How charming!" she cried. "I will fasten them on my gown to-night. Surely they do not bloom so early at home; this is in truth a very wonderful country."

"These came from a pretty Dutch farm out on the road they call the Bowery; I sat on my horse and watched the good Frau gather them where they grew under the hedge in great quantities, and though I could not understand a word she said in doubtless very excellent Dutch, she evidently comprehended my English money."

"And pray, since you are minded to ride, why did you not ask the pleasure of my company? Not a ride have I taken since I set foot in New York, and, faith, I'm pining for one, now you mention it, Kerry. When shall we go — to-morrow?"

"Any time, anywhere, — even to the world's end," cried Kerry, filled with delight to find the capricious dame so kind.

"Are you sure you can obtain a good mount for me? Then we will go exploring to-morrow, and perhaps the good Frau may have other flowers as well."

"Ah, Patrice," the man said, half sadly, "if you only knew how enchanting you are when you are kind."

"The same to you, sir," she laughed saucily. Then, as Kerry's quick frown appeared, she leaned over and touched his arm. "I have been thinking about the singular way that the 'Luck' vanishes; and in this instance I think you are wrong to suspect Dopple. She says that there were three yellow dominos on the floor that night; and that a mask dressed like a Spanish grandee accosted her and demanded 'where

she had hidden herself so successfully from Peggy'; whereat Dopple, to use her own words: 'I bid 'im take his 'and hoff my harm, as I 'ad nothink to say to 'im, and madam, the man, he laughed, and cried, "Cockney, by gad!" which was in the 'ighest degree uncivil and hinsulting.'" And Patrice fell to laughing. "For, you know, Kerry, Dopple usually minds her '*h*'s' except when frightened, and nothing makes her so angry as an allusion to her 'parts of speech,' of which she is as vain as our friend Mrs. Malaprop."

"I fear that Dopple did not obey you by wearing the yellow domino, Patrice, for I encountered one whom I took for her, and spoke to her, but found out my mistake at once." Kerry pulled himself up abruptly; he had no mind to inform Patrice of his effort to bribe her maid, and therefore slid off such thin ice immediately. "Evidently there was a game of cross-purposes on foot that night. I cannot conceive how you ever came to entrust anything so valuable to any hand but your own."

Patrice bit her lip. She could not tell Kerry that she had taken the jewel to the ball, half

intending to give it to Nugent; neither did she wish to confess that in the haste of her dressing in her chariot she had unwittingly taken up the domino intended for Dopple and given the maid the one she had meant for her own wearing. So she quickly threw down the gage of battle.

"Indeed, 't is yourself that 's to blame for that same! Did you not implore me to give it to you when I left the stage, and 't was only because the clasp of the chain was a bit loose that I did not wear it myself, though heaven knows what Mary Stuart, poor soul! would be doing with an Irish shamrock of bad luck hanging on her neck — she had troubles enough of her own without it."

Irritated and angered though Kerry was, his sense of humor overpowered him for a moment. When Patrice "took to her Irish" she was irresistible, and with her usual adroitness she beguiled him into a laugh.

"Peace to her soul, and good luck to her 'fair counterfeit.' Whenever I attempt to scold you, you jump over a fence and laugh at me."

"Then it 's plenty of fences I 'm taking now-

adays; but, thank heaven, never a cropper," sighed Patrice, relieved at her clever escape from the quick-witted Kerry. "And as I 've stated everything I can think of by way of assisting you in what — to me — savors of looking for a needle in a load of hay — "

" Haystack," quoted Kerry provokingly.

" No, sir; load of hay, — don't correct me, 't is bad manners, — then perhaps you 'll oblige me by indicating what on earth you wish me to do in the matter."

" Ask Madam Apthorpe (but casually, as it were) if she can inform you who wore the yellow dominos, and also if you could find out any maid or dame among her guests who answers to the name of 'Peggy.'" Patrice groaned. " Then I will go about to any pawnshops that there be in this town and see if by chance Dopple has deposited the 'Luck' for safe-keeping at one of them. It will not be wise to investigate the loss of the locket too openly; do not forget the danger of any friend of Colin Carmichael scenting the fact of its return to these shores, in which case his claim to it would be far greater than ours."

"Yours," corrected Patrice. "Nay, Kerry, I do not seek to anger you, but for myself 't is little I care to whom the Nugent don bequeaths his money. His estates are what *I* crave, and small chance is there of my ever possessing either."

Kerry looked up in some astonishment at the bitterness of her tone. "I fail to understand you," he said; "I thought the old man particularly kind to you in Paris, and for the matter of that, my dear, you can wile a bird off a bush when you choose — why not persuade him to break the entail — "

"Oh, you are mad — quite mad, Kerry Fitzgerald, and not one ha'pennyworth do you understand about the whole affair; save that your share in it is the money you want — and which I mean to get for you. You have talked and talked in a circle until my head is in a whirl and" — dropping suddenly from anger to her most wheedling voice — "and it 's an ill-tempered lass I am, to be sure, and what hour will we be going to ride to-morrow? I've a thousand things to do, and must drive out to call on Madam Apthorpe, as you bid me, in

the morning; so, shall we say four in the afternoon? — which, an' it please your worship, will bring me back in full time for dinner before going to the play."

"And supper after it," said Kerry beseechingly. "You will take supper with me at the King's Arms, will you not?"

"Perhaps; leave that until we have had our ride out the shady lanes to find the Dutch farm and more flowers. Kerry, begone this minute; 't is past eleven and my rehearsal is called for noon. I vow the tearing haste which I am compelled to use in my toilets in this new country is taking the flesh off my bones, and I will be nothing save a neat little skeleton by the time we see London again."

Kerry sauntered lazily down the stairway and turned into the shop below. There were several customers being served at one of the counters, but at the door he came suddenly in collision with two others just entering, with the result that he knocked a parasol from the hand that held it, and recovered his balance just in time to save Peggy Provoost from falling.

"Madam," he ejaculated, hat in hand, "I beg ten thousand pardons for my awkwardness, and I pray you to forgive me," rescuing the parasol, and shaking off the dust which it had gathered from the floor. "I shall never forgive myself for causing you such a shock."

"Oh!" gasped Peggy, clutching Miss Moppet's arm in her embarrassment. "'Tis of no consequence, sir, I assure you; I am quite unhurt, and so is my parasol."

But Kerry's eyes had passed beyond her, and were now fixed with a glance of somewhat bold admiration upon Faith Wolcott's beautiful face. For an instant her eyes swept over his face and figure, then she passed quickly on; but her heart was beating a trifle faster as she said to herself: "The mountebank! I know that voice — there is no mistaking it. Now, for whom did he take me at the ball when he demanded 'the packet'? 'Tis passing strange if I have made another discovery for Monsieur l'Inconnu."

The "Sign of the Rose and Crown" was a very favorite shop for the fashionable dames of New York, and as Peggy found that her

gowns, purchased in Albany, were not quite what were worn in the larger city, she had persuaded Miss Moppet, nothing loath, to accompany her and help her select others, instead of paying visits that morning. It was a delightful occupation, Peggy found, to pull over the various stuffs; the silks from France, the muslins and crêpes from India, and certain lovely white-and-gold fabrics which sea-captains had found in the far East and brought for market to the New World. While Peggy was hesitating between the charms of a flowered blue-and-pink brocade and an embroidered white-and-gold crêpe, Miss Moppet wandered back in the shop where several petticoats and other garments were piled on a box, and a woman was endeavoring to strike a bargain with the clerk who waited upon her.

"The silk is good, but the garment would not be of much value to our trade," said the man, civilly enough, "and by the time there be another masked ball given here, which is not likely to come just at present, perchance no one would care to purchase it."

"But, you see," persisted the woman, "this

is a domino; and the fashion does not change for them because they are worn over the dress; so," and she flung the gayly-flowered domino over her head as she spoke. Miss Moppet, glancing quickly at it, at once recognized it as her own. But not caring to claim it under the circumstances, she fell to examining closely a brocade petticoat of voluminous size, while she listened attentively to the bargaining.

"If you will give me no more than nine shillings for it," said the woman sulkily, "I suppose I shall have to take it, as I am in haste, though you are getting it dirt cheap; why, I don't doubt some of the dames of our company would give me more — in Lunnon Town you could easily get a pun' note for such silk as that."

"So you might," agreed the man, with a shade more eagerness in his manner. "Did you say 't was a garment worn by the actress, Mistress O'Halloran, who lodges above the shop? If that be so, I might go so far as to say ten shillings for it."

"Done!" cried the woman quickly. "Give me the money, for I must go on to the theatre

where my mistress holds a rehearsal, and" — lowering her voice as she perceived Miss Moppet's proximity — "since you are so obliging, if you would fancy coming around to see us to-night I might even beg a seat for you from old Nicholas, the door-keeper. He sometimes has one in the pit not disposed of, and will give it to me if I ask him."

Miss Moppet looked closely at Dopple as she stood ogling the clerk, and when the woman in high good humor had left the shop, she lifted the pink domino from the box where it had been carelessly thrown, and surveyed it carefully. Yes, it was hers; there were the very pink bows which Betty had sewed on the left sleeve as a distinguishing mark. Miss Moppet wondered whether the woman who sold it could have worn it. At all events, she would instantly purchase it. Betty might ask inconvenient questions, and she did not want, even yet, to mention her adventures at the ball. She glanced over her shoulder; Peggy was conversing eagerly with the proprietor of the shop, and evidently still undecided as to her choice of goods.

"I think I will purchase this domino," said Miss Moppet, addressing the clerk as he returned from escorting Dopple to the door; "kindly lay it aside for me until to-morrow, as I did not fetch my purse with me. What is its price?"

"One pound six," said the man quickly. "Mistress Yorke has an account with us; shall I add this to it?"

"No," returned Miss Moppet with decision. "I will send my own servant for the parcel and he will settle for it."

Peggy, with Miss Moppet's assistance, finally decided in favor of the gold-and-white crêpe, and that weighty matter being adjusted, the pair made their way out of the fascinating "Rose and Crown."

Miss Moppet allowed Peggy's tongue to run on uninterrupted for part of the way home, as her thoughts were busy with this new development in regard to the dominos. "Now, why did the maid wish to dispose of my domino in such haste," pondered she. "I am convinced, between one thing and another, that some one — yes, several people — are plotting against

Monsieur l'Inconnu. But plots have been made before, and failed, for there is such a thing as a counterplot, as you may possibly find out, Mistress O'Halloran!"

CHAPTER XI

By the Minetta Water

THE notes are all finished, Betty; shall I dispatch Pompey with them, or do you prefer to have Cato deliver them, as I am going forth for a ride this afternoon and Geoffrey always desires me to have a groom in attendance?"

"'T is his English idea, Moppet; there are some few points on which even I, with due persistence, have not yet been able to induce him to look with American eyes," sighed Mistress Betty, with pretended resignation. "Of course, New York is quite different from our dear Litchfield Town, where one hardly ever thought of such an addition as a groom; but, if you and Peggy wish to go for a ride out Bloomingdale way, or even the Boston Road, perhaps I might give you leave to dispense with Pompey for once."

"Peggy?" Miss Moppet's interrogation was mischief itself. "As if you had not perceived

that each day about the same hour (usually in the afternoon) Peggy grows restless, and finds some excellent excuse for tripping over to Brother Oliver's to consult Kitty as to the progress of her new pattern of embroidery, and if you should chance to look out of the drawing-room window as she trips down the stoop, lo! a gentleman in a cinnamon-colored cloth suit of the very latest mode appears hastening down Wall Street, and the pair straightway disappear around the nearest corner."

"Philip Van Cortlandt, to wit," laughed Betty. "I have not been fortunate enough to catch views from my window, but ever since the Apthorpe ball and Philip's rescue of Peggy from the hands of the maskers, I have noticed that she has not been quite as shy as when she first arrived in New York."

"And I have not heard Aunt Anneke quoted more than once a day, of late," pursued Miss Moppet; "therefore, you see, Betty, that for to-day I will have Pompey in attendance in order" — primly — "that my dearly beloved brother may consider me quite properly chaperoned."

"Which convinces me that you are meditating some piece of mischief," answered Betty, too intent upon tying a bow upon one of Molly's frocks to notice the quick blush that would have betrayed the artful plotter had she happened to look up at that moment. "Pray, where are you intending to ride today?"

"I think I will pay a visit to Apthorpe House." Miss Moppet, mischievous as she was, felt a sudden qualm of conscience. Never before had she willfully deceived the sister she adored, and yet — "I have an errand there," she added quickly. "Colonel Carmichael desired to return the book which madam lent him, and which Pompey can carry for me."

This time Betty raised her eyes and surveyed the speaker, but Moppet's cheeks had regained their usual hue, and with ready wit for the ease of her conscience she proceeded to lead Betty's thoughts in quite another direction.

"I have had no chance for a talk with you, Betty, dear, we have been so busy of late with dinners and balls and other distractions, but I

have been longing to ask you, ever since it occurred, if you know what caused Colonel Carmichael's sudden illness the night of our last dinner. Pray, who is Nugent Carmichael, the young officer of whom Comte de Valdemont told that most dramatic story?"

"Only his son."

"His son, Betty?" Moppet's tone was one of liveliest surprise. "His son? Why, I never heard that he had one. I thought Carmichael of Carmichael (as everybody calls him, like the chief of a Highland clan) was a dear friend of the Wolcott family, who, for some unknown reason, perhaps ill-health, has always secreted himself on his estate. Do tell me all about it; I am sure it's an interesting story, and I always did love a 'flimming' tale."

"Even in the days of dear Miss Bidwell when she used to tell you of Indians," laughed Betty, as the quaint expression recalled Moppet's childhood. "Yes, it is a story, though one around which still clings a mystery. Nugent, — poor fellow, I remember him well, — a handsome, dashing boy, only eighteen years old when it all happened."

"What happened? Oh, Betty, do cease tying bows and proceed with your story."

"It was this way, Moppet. While New York was still in British occupation, Nugent Carmichael came up from Virginia to attend to some of the property which is located here in the city owned by his father. In some way, of course through influence, he was allowed to enter; it was said in those days that his father favored the Tory cause, although he came out bravely afterward for the Patriots and General Washington. The youngster ruffled it with the best of the British officers, gaming and frequenting the theatres and taverns like other gallants, and one night there was a brawl at the Theatre Royal, as our John Street playhouse was then called. It was concerning a pretty actress then playing there, I think her name was Antoinette L'Estrange, and on that night as she left the stage at the conclusion of the play, a gentleman who chanced to be behind the scenes, brought there by one of the British officers, offered her an insult by calling her a vile name when she refused to submit to a caress. Nugent, who happened to be standing by, instantly re-

sented it, striking the man; then drawing his sword compelled him to fight. They fought all across the stage. Nugent, being a better swordsman, forced his adversary toward the wings, where the stranger adroitly sprang aside, and as Nugent lunged forward his sword pierced the breast of one of the spectators, a young Frenchman, a member of the company. And here, Moppet, comes the singular part of the story. Whether, seeing that he was at Nugent's mercy, the stranger intentionally, to save himself, thrust the innocent Frenchman before Nugent's sword or not, no one seems to know from the conflicting accounts of the bystanders; but the Frenchman was killed, and Nugent, forced to fly from the theatre by his British friends, was smuggled out of New York. His father, when the news reached him, condemned him utterly, in his wrath, retired to his estate on the James River, and forbade Nugent's name to be mentioned before him."

"Oh, Betty! Without investigation — without hearing the poor fellow's own defense? No wonder that Carmichael fainted at the recital of that gallant, gallant incident told

by Comte de Valdemont," cried Miss Moppet.

"You will make a hero of him at once," said Betty. "It was great injustice. I have always felt the punishment was excessive, and I cannot but think there is some explanation behind it to explain his father's implacable conduct. They are a hot-headed race, Moppet; the mother was beautiful Mona Nugent, the only daughter of the Nugent don, and she eloped with Carmichael and married him without her father's consent. Oh, it is a long, long story, and I have finished Molly's frock, and you must go and put on your habit if you mean to ride out to Apthorpe House."

"Stay, Betty, is it true that Nugent Carmichael, having disappeared at that time, has never been heard of or from since that fray at the theatre?"

"So Geoffrey tells me. I have talked with him about the old affair, which he says took place after he joined the British forces in South Carolina; but, Moppet, say what you will, my heart aches for that fine old man in his loneliness, heart-broken over the disgrace and dis-

appearance of his only son. Think what it was for him to hear that story; to feel pride once again in the boy he may have mourned as dead. I consider Nugent Carmichael's misfortunes a most tragic story; but I trust that he will not return to these shores until some of the mystery attending it is solved, as he killed the young Frenchman —"

"But 't was by accident, surely?" interrupted Miss Moppet. "Did not investigation prove that?"

"I do not know. There were all manner of tales, for it made a sensation at the time. If you wish more details you must ask Geoffrey, who seems greatly interested since the scene at dinner. He has fairly haunted Carmichael's chamber — which reminds me that I do not recollect whether I gave orders to have a morning punch sent there;" and Betty escaped as Moppet ran up the staircase to her own room.

Miss Moppet's mind had been somewhat troubled since giving her promise to meet Monsieur l'Inconnu by the Minetta Water, lest in so doing she was wanting in maidenly reserve. Aunt Euphemia's exordiums on that

subject suddenly and most inconveniently occurred to her, and although she wanted to meet the mysterious stranger and return the "Luck of Rathcoole" to him more than she had ever desired anything in her life, some newly born emotion which she dared not analyze forbade her to seek the rendezvous in quite such unceremonious fashion, and the result of her reflections was a note which reached Nugent by Pompey's safe hand at Macben's little shop early that morning.

Monsieur L'Inconnu (it ran in French)

I am going forth at four o'clock to-day to exercise my mare on the Lispenard Meadows. Should you chance to pass that way the view is best from the little grove of oaks by the Minetta Water.

And beneath the lines, oh, roguish Moppet, — her fingers had traced lightly the outline of an Indian arrow-head.

Up to her bedroom in some haste flew Miss Moppet, and before putting on her habit she bethought herself that she would secure the

"Luck" by clasping it around her neck where it would lie in safety, unseen. So down on her knees she went, and dived deep into the little brass-nailed trunk, the depository of her few treasures, but which, carelessly, she never dreamed of locking. At the very bottom, where she had hidden it, lay the now-famous yellow domino, beneath the Indian dress, which Moppet surveyed with a merry smile as she thought how it had served her well for her masquerade. But the smile faded, and became a frown of genuine consternation, when, after searching the pocket, shaking the domino, indeed, pulling out on the floor every article the trunk contained, she found no trace of the necklet. The "Luck of Rathcoole" had vanished.

"It must be fairy-gold," cried Miss Moppet despairingly, wringing her hands in dismay. "Who on earth can have taken it? The servants are all above suspicion, and Betty would never dream of hunting through my belongings. Now what am I to do in such a dilemma; and, oh, *what* shall I say to Monsieur l'Inconnu? And he looked so delighted when I told him I

had it — how shall I ever confess that it has been lost again! It seems as if it were indeed bewitched. And oh! that hateful, *hateful* O'Halloran" — Moppet stamped her pretty foot, and danced up and down in a rage that was reminiscent of her childhood's storms — "I 'll wager this is the result of her machinations."

The May sunshine shone brightly down upon the blue waters of the Collect Pond where, in winter, all fashionable New York were wont to assemble for skating and the various winter games then in vogue for young people, while the chaperones and older folk watched the gay scene from the surrounding hillocks. The Minetta Water, a small stream, was the outlet for the Pond, and ran through the Lispenard Meadows to the Hudson River. It was a very picturesque, babbling little brook, and many wild flowers grew on its banks, where oftentimes, later in the season, picnics were held and riding-parties made, but at this early time of the year few went along its winding way, especially not in the afternoon, which was the fashionable hour for driving out on the Bowery

(or Boston Road) to Kings Bridge, and Miss Moppet knew that in all probability she would be secure from any passers-by who might prove acquaintances.

Nugent, whose eyes had twinkled with delight over the tiny note, which brought him to the rendezvous full half an hour too soon, had debated whether he would or would not procure a horse and join her, mounted. He remembered the meadows, and knowing that his only chance for meeting Miss Moppet again was in the open (as she would never have consented to any other sort of appointment), he much preferred walking there. But as most of his early life had been passed on horseback it proved a temptation to ride, even with a somewhat uncertain shoulder; and although the ship's surgeon stoutly refused to allow him to omit the sling, he finally decided to procure a mount, a decision for which he was destined to be devoutly thankful.

When she turned off Broadway and cantered rapidly along the path, Miss Moppet had not gone far before she discerned the horseman waiting under the oak trees, and just before

she reached him she drew rein and gave Pompey his orders: "Wait for me out of earshot behind the end oak, Pompey," she said, "and should you perceive in the distance a coach or riders coming from town draw near at once. I wish no interruption, otherwise, while I am talking to yonder gentleman."

"Yes, Missy," answered Pompey obediently.

He had, of course, recognized Nugent, but was too accustomed to "li'le Missy's" caprices to have this one cause him much surprise. Still, with the native shrewdness of the old-time negro, Pompey resolved to be very much on the alert as he selected the spot from whence he obtained the best outlook for undesired intruders both up and down the road.

Miss Moppet had arranged carefully in her mind what she would say and how best convey in proper terms of regret the loss of the "Luck," but when Nugent rode a few paces forward to meet her and she met the ardent love-light in his eyes, every idea fled from her, and instead of her carefully considered sentences what she said was:—

"Oh, monsieur, monsieur, I have lost the 'Luck.' Can you ever forgive me?" and to her consternation, her lips quivered as she laid her hand in his.

"Dearest, and loveliest!" he cried, casting prudence to the winds as he saw her emotion. "Lost, did you say? I care not what be gone can I win but one word of hope, — perchance, one word of love from you, — you, who, from the first moment that I touched this dear hand, I have silently adored."

"Silently, did you say, monsieur?" Miss Moppet's irresistible dimple crept back into her cheek, but she did not withdraw her hand, which he daringly proceeded to cover with kisses. "Silently? Methinks I remember that even that night when you bade me adieu after the ball, you called me — "

"*Mon cœur!*" cried the transported lover.

"And I also fear that 't is very daring and perhaps ill-judged for a New England maid like me to give a rendezvous — Nay, unless you restore me my hand at once, I must signal for Pompey. And I dare not picture what Aunt Euphemia would say could she see me

at this moment;" and Miss Moppet's sigh was belied by her smile.

"If you will but give me hope that I may win you —"

"Take care, sir! You are rash. You do not even know my name."

"I only know that life without you would be —"

"More tranquil than with me, perhaps?" She swayed slightly toward him from her saddle, and the barest whisper reached his eager ears. "Rest assured that I would not have met you here to-day, monsieur, had I not penetrated your secret. You are Nugent Carmichael."

CHAPTER XII

When Green seeks Blue

NUGENT bared his head. "I am he," he said simply; "Nugent Carmichael, onetime seaman in the Navy of the United States, and of late an officer in the service of his Imperial Majesty, the Czar of Russia."

"And what of the scene on board the Alliance when you gallantly lashed the flag to the main —"

"Mademoiselle, I pray you — 't was but my duty." Nugent flushed fiery red. Then, amazement getting the better of his temporary embarrassment, "In Heaven's name, how did that tale reach you?"

"'A bird of the air hath carried the matter,'" quoted Miss Moppet gayly, finding herself mistress of the situation. "I may tell you some day, but meantime, what can I do to serve you, or how atone for my great carelessness in not having locked up the necklet securely? Indeed, the whole matter of its loss is strangely

mysterious, for no one has access to the place where I thought it safely hidden."

"Do not be distressed," implored Nugent, "but, of your goodness, will you permit me to tell you why I am so anxious to regain it, and the cause of my being incognito in New York."

At this inopportune moment Miss Moppet's mare, always a restless mount, becoming conscious that the horse at her side was in too close proximity to please her, essayed a playful bite in his direction and then executed a sidestep which decidedly interfered with any conversation.

"I think," said Miss Moppet demurely, after having with rein and whip reduced the mare to terms,—"I think, if you have no objection, I will dismount, and while Pompey, my servant, holds the rein, you and I may gather a few of the wild flowers which I see bordering the stream yonder, and then, monsieur," with an enchanting smile, "you will have an opportunity to tell me what you desire."

Nugent flung himself from his saddle, and turned to aid her dismount, but Miss Moppet

had slipped to the ground as swiftly as he, and holding the mare's rein signaled Pompey, who came speedily to receive orders, and retired with the horses under the trees while the pair walked slowly down the bank of the brook.

"I scarce know where to commence," said Nugent, "for if you know my name I fear you also know the unfortunate story which has clung to it."

"I have heard it—in part," she answered softly, "and from one who sympathized greatly in your misfortunes."

"Is there, then, such in New York? Thank Heaven, 't was not condemnation of me that reached you. Yes, it is quite true that through a reckless but entirely justifiable effort to punish an uncalled-for insult to a woman, I mortally offended my father and killed a man with whom I had no quarrel. But for that last, I am beginning to hope there is reason to believe I am not guilty."

"Oh! That is good, good news!" impetuous Miss Moppet interrupted; then turned rosy-red. "I was sure there had not been proper investigation," she ended, with dignity.

"At times the remembrance of that wild night's work seems a dreadful nightmare. My flight from New York was made much against my will, as I preferred the more manly part of standing a trial, but Captain Montague and Ensign Loftus, my two friends, British Navy officers both, insisted on my disappearing, and managed to get me aboard a vessel just leaving the port, and I was on the ocean outward bound before I had time for reflection. I need not dwell upon my vicissitudes by sea and land until I finally fought my way into a position befitting my name and rank. For much of this I am deeply beholden to a hero of many gallant battles — John Paul Jones, my captain, and I am proud to add, my friend."

"And the 'Luck of Rathcoole'?" cried Miss Moppet breathlessly. To what wonderful revelations was her madcap adventure leading? "Did you carry it with you when you fled, and when did you lose it?"

"No; it was in my father's possession when I left Carmichael Hall, and — as I know he would never give it away — probably stolen

from him and carried to Paris, where I saw it, in the hands of a perfect stranger. The story of our 'Luck' is a long one; given by King Charles the Second to my ancestor, the Nugent don of that day, it has borne both a prophecy and a curse with its ownership, some of which have been already fulfilled, but the curious part of it is (although I am not much affected by the family superstition) that it has of late seemed like a good omen to me. For the prophecy runs —

> 'When Shamrock and the Thistle twine,
> Woe, woe, to those of Nugent's line!
> Luck shall be lost and found no more,
> Till Green seeks Blue on foreign shore.'"

"'T is passing strange," mused Miss Moppet, as he paused, and she bent forward to gather the violets that lurked in the grass at her feet. "Shamrock and Thistle — read me your riddle, monsieur, for I am eager to learn it."

"Do you not see?" his voice sank low with feeling. "My father — God bless him! — belongs to one of Scotland's proudest clans, and my beautiful mother wore the Shamrock on

her breast when she fled with him. That is the second part of the prophecy. Now, here am I, though born on these shores, yet they are to me, through mine own act, alas! foreign. But I am also seeking the 'Luck' and the 'Blue,' as the old rhyme bids,—the Blue of the Stars and Stripes,—and when I find it I will twine it with the 'Green,'—the color of Ireland, which is mine by inheritance. Ah—dare I hope—"

"For these violets, sir?" They fell through her fingers as she spoke. "Perchance they may serve to remind you of that elusive but desired blue."

If any ardent lover could withstand the witchery of her half-consenting, half-denying voice and smile, that lover was not Nugent Carmichael. In another instant he had clasped her to his heart, there, by the Minetta Water.

"Fie, fie, sir!" the sweet lips whispered in his ear; "do you not know this is very wrong?"

"Pompey is safely hidden by that blessed tree, and — 'only the birds of the air can carry the matter'!"

"What will Aunt Euphemia say!" sighed

the mischievous maid, slipping away from him in pretended dismay. "We are both behaving in the most unheard-of manner, and I have half a mind to mount and ride away, only" — hesitating for a brief second — "I confess I must hear the rest of your story."

But the story had to wait, for the transports of this most masterful lover were poured again and again into the pretty ears which, Miss Moppet's chronicler is forced to admit, most eagerly received them.

"The afternoon is speeding away," said Miss Moppet, suddenly awaking to that fact, "and I have to ride on to Apthorpe House. But before we part tell me what clue you have obtained in regard to the Frenchman. Yes," seeing Nugent's look of bewilderment, "you said some time since that you had reason to believe that you were not guilty of his death. You certainly did say it, although you have said and done so many totally unexpected things in the last half-hour that I begin to believe the whole world of yesterday is upset."

"So may it remain," prayed the ardent lover,

"provided we are together. Yes, dearest, you are right, and it is indeed important news. Before I left France I met in Paris, quite by accident, Mademoiselle L'Estrange, and it was she who told me that she had reason to believe that D'Anvers was still alive and somewhere in America."

"Oh, where — where?" Miss Moppet cried eagerly.

"That, alas! I have still to find out, but I believe there is a chance to my hand in this city. I am going to visit the theatre, for it occurs to me that an old man who is now doorkeeper there may have some knowledge of D'Anvers. I saw him the very day I arrived in New York, but when he alluded to the old affair I did my best to silence him. If I can prove that I am not guilty of murder, I will then be able to go to my father in Virginia, and, I hope, be reconciled with him, and then, dearest and loveliest, may I have your permission to seek your hand from your father, whoe'er he may be?"

"He will not be far to seek," quoth Miss Moppet, with dancing eyes. "His name? May-

hap you have heard it before, as 't is not unknown in these United States."

"And it is — "

"General Oliver Wolcott, an it please you, sir."

"General Wolcott!" was Nugent's amazed exclamation. "Then you are — "

"Faith Wolcott — sometime known to her *very* intimate friends as Miss Moppet."

"Missy! Missy!" — Pompey and the horses were just behind them, coming across the grass, and in the distance there came galloping along the path a rider. "I jes' want ter see if li'le Missy's mare have picked up a stone in de fore-foot; 'pears like she stands mighty uneasy." Then, as the intruder drew nearer the oaks, "Dat's all, Missy; I 'll sure find it," and when the passer-by came close enough to perceive the group, the clever old darky was busying himself over the belied hoof, thereby saving the situation by a perfectly simple expedient.

Miss Moppet, occupied in arranging her habit before mounting, did not raise her head as the horse's feet came past, but Nugent turned just in time to see that the rider was a

HIS HAND SOUGHT HIS CHAPEAU IN GREETING

woman, and as she dashed by them the lovely face of Patrice O'Halloran met his surprised gaze. His hand sought his chapeau in greeting, but there was no response; only a flick of the whip to her horse as she swept down the road toward the river.

CHAPTER XIII

A Game which Two can play

MISS MOPPET gave the rein to her mare and reached Apthorpe House fully an hour later than she had planned. But why care for that, when "the light that never was on sea or shore" lay sparkling in her eyes and beating heart — that maiden heart which had lain all untouched beneath her mischief and coquetry, waiting for the master-hand of Love. True to her loyal race, she was even then cudgeling her busy brain for ways and means to establish Nugent's innocence and accomplish the reconciliation with his father.

"I will first of all hold council with Betty," thought the charming maid, as she rode along. "Dear Betty! 't will bring back her own romance in which I, child that I was, had a hand. But mine is even more romantic than was hers — Betty had three long years before Geoffrey finally won her, and here am I, who am always wont to be a willful maid, surrendering in —

oh, it *must* be more than one short week! I will have to summon all my courage to confess it. But then Betty had war and Tories to contend with, and I —" Moppet shook her head over her delinquencies. "Verily I have not even that excuse. I have been taken by storm." Here Miss Moppet blushed divinely, and flung her reins to Pompey as she dismounted.

In her stately drawing-room sat Madam Apthorpe entertaining a visitor, and as Miss Moppet advanced down the room she recognized her before her hostess pronounced the name of her first guest.

"It gives me pleasure, Mistress Wolcott, to present you to Mistress O'Halloran, who has just ridden out from town to pay me a visit. May I offer you a seed-cake and a glass of Madeira? And where is your sister? I hoped she had accompanied you."

"Betty was detained at home; we have a guest who is somewhat indisposed and I left her concocting milk punch and other beverages."

"I did not have the honor to meet you at the ball, Mistress Wolcott, if my memory serves,"

said Patrice, addressing Moppet, and there was something in her tone which the quick-witted maid felt was antagonistic.

"*En garde!*" said Miss Moppet to herself, as she replied aloud, "We danced in the same minuet, and if I mistake not, Mistress O'Halloran's partner was a mask dressed as a mountebank."

Patrice shot a keen glance over her glass of Madeira in her direction, but Moppet was eating her seed-cake with undoubted relish, and with not even a suggestion of anything save courtesy in her manner.

"Mistress Wolcott is a keen observer. How came you to divine that it was I who danced in that set?"

"You give me credit for more than I deserve," returned Miss Moppet. "I had heard a whisper that the beautiful mask, Mary Stuart, concealed the honor guest of the evening. It was my first ball," turning a smiling face upon her hostess, "and I have to thank you, madam, for its charm and varied experience."

"I trust," said Madam Apthorpe, uneasily conscious that there was an undertone of some-

thing not quite congenial between her two guests — "I trust that you met with no *mal à propos* incident while masked?"

"Oh, no!" cried Moppet; "on the contrary, I won a wager, contrived to penetrate two or three disguises, and enjoyed myself thoroughly."

"Was it not a beautiful ball?" pursued Patrice. "I was engaged in trying to express my thanks for the superb hospitality of Apthorpe House as you entered. Indeed, never have I met with more kindly interest than in this new world, and as for my houses at the theatre they grow more and more enthusiastic each night."

"It is most gratifying to hear that we Americans have made so marked an impression," said their hostess, relieved at the more friendly turn of the conversation, "for I am sure that in many ways we are very different from England. The old Dutch ideas still obtain among us New Yorkers, and their formal and ceremonious manners are totally different from the courtesies of London."

"You forget we are, some of us, still rebels," said Miss Moppet, with a merry laugh, "and

we of New England have a code somewhat more precise than even the Knickerbockers."

Madam Apthorpe smiled. Miss Moppet was a privileged character, else she would not have dared to utter such a sentiment under the roof of a thoroughgoing Tory, who, however, having known her when a child, could afford to pardon the good-natured quip.

"That is the result of your Puritan ancestors," she replied. "You see, Mistress O'Halloran, we are made up of many complexions, — Dutch, New England, and the Cavaliers of Virginia and the Carolinas, — but we can all of us meet on the common ground of admiration for your wonderful art and charming personality."

This certainly was disarming in its flattering compliment, but Patrice was in one of her reckless moods, and made answer:—

"Ah, madam, you excel even the French in your graceful courtesy. But, pardon me if I am over-curious, does your formality extend as far as ours in the matter of chaperones? To-day, as I hastened out alone (being unfortunately unable to procure the services of a

groom), I saw a charming group under the trees down near the water,—two riders, a young man and a maid,—who were so engrossed with each other that they did not even see me dash past. In London that could never be possible except with our lower classes, the Darby and Joan order; we are only permitted to ride in Hyde Park with our gallants, and even then, with a groom in close attendance."

Nothing could have exceeded the studied insolence of Patrice's eyes as they met Miss Moppet's tranquil gaze, but the *grande dame* to whom she addressed her remark was quite equal to the occasion.

"You must have seen some of our own people," she said composedly. "There are plenty of young folk here who have grown up together, and who would be thought straining at gnats to require the formality of a chaperon, or groom, in a ride over the Lispenard Meadows. But set those same young folk in my drawing-room and they could never be guilty of retiring into corners, *tête-à-tête*, as I am told is done nowadays in London, at the routs and most fashionable balls at the great houses."

Miss Moppet, whose soul was filled with joy at this retort courteous, looked so demure and unconcerned that Patrice, unable to tell whether her shot had struck home, could have boxed her pretty ears with sincerest pleasure. After that passage of arms, however, the conversation ran on for a few minutes between Madam Apthorpe and Patrice concerning the latest fashionable news in London, and then the O'Halloran took graceful leave of her hostess with a Parthian arrow for Miss Moppet.

"I remember you now, Mistress Wolcott," she said sweetly; "you were the pink domino — or was it an Indian girl? — who danced with such grace and *abandon* on the lawn under the oak trees."

"I?" said Miss Moppet, in a tone of extreme bewilderment. "You mistake, Mistress O'Halloran. The domino I wore was yellow."

Patrice was playing to a select audience of two, but it took all her *aplomb* and tact to make her adieux without open display of the wrath and astonishment that filled her soul. The New England maid had met her on her

own ground, and the victory had not been hers.

While Miss Moppet was regaling herself with seed-cake and quietly effacing the recollection of any dance upon the lawn from Madam Apthorpe's mind (for brave front as she had shown to Patrice, she was inwardly quaking with terror lest that madcap episode be told at present), Patrice was dashing homeward at a speed that put her horse to his best pace, and when she dismounted at the door of the "Rose and Crown" she was greeted by Dopple with an exclamation of dismay.

"Oh, madam, you have been riding too fast. You are quite pale, and dinner waits."

"Be quiet," commanded her mistress, tearing off her gloves and flying up the staircase; "find me a messenger at once; I want no dinner. I must see Mr. Fitzgerald instantly."

"Mr. Fitzgerald left word, madam, as he passed on horseback an hour ago, that, with your permission, he would meet you at the King's Arms Tavern directly after the play to-night, and he 'oped you would do him the honor of supping with him. He desired me to

tell you that the haccident to the girth of his saddle, which compelled him to leave you, could not be mended in time to overtake you."

"Ah, then I will see him later, 't will do as well," sighed Patrice wearily, as she sank into her chair and permitted the maid to remove her hat. "No dinner, thank you, Dopple; faith, I've had dinner enough to last for a twelve-month."

"Dinner?" gasped Dopple. "Where, madam?"

"Give me a glass of liqueur," said Patrice, "then draw the curtains and let me rest until time to go to the playhouse." And sinking back on the *chaise longue*, she closed her eyes as Dopple left the room.

King's Arms, the hostelry most frequented by the fashion of New York, not only possessed a large dining-room which boasted the unusual luxury of a carpet, but to insure privacy there were arranged within its precincts four so-called "boxes," that is, small spaces with partitions extending nearly to the ceiling, which were curtained, and where, each hold-

ing a small table and chairs, supper could be served for two or four persons. There being but four of these, they were often in demand, and when Fitzgerald, entering with the O'Halloran after the play, found that the one he had engaged had been held for him, he heaved a sigh of satisfaction, for, as usual, the fair dame had kept him waiting and it was now nearly midnight.

"Wine, Kerry, wine," demanded Patrice, seating herself and drawing off her gloves, as the attendant set a plate before her. "I am thirsty — aye, fill it up to the brim," extending her glass, "and I will give a toast. Here's confusion to our enemies, and success to you and me in our search for the 'Luck of Rathcoole'!"

Kerry drained his glass, but as he set it down he said: "Have a care, Patrice; though it's private enough, and the curtains are drawn, use French if you have aught of importance to communicate. And now," continuing in that language, "what excites you to-night? You played with a fire and force that you seldom use; is it because you have good news

for me, or is it bad luck that has set you aflame?"

"Perhaps it is both, for as regards the 'Luck,' — whereby I mean the missing jewel and not chance, — so far, I have no tidings of it. But as regards Nugent Carmichael, I have changed my mind. You thought — indeed, you have even ventured to say that I had some personal reason for leniency so far as he is concerned."

"Nay," he interrupted, "you mistook — "

"Do not trouble yourself to deny it, sir. I think you have done me the honor to imagine that my heart was somewhat tenderly moved toward him. On the contrary, there is no one at this moment whom I would so gladly see humiliated and worsted as that same Leftenant Nugent Carmichael, late in the service of his Majesty the Czar."

The entrance of the attendant, bearing the supper ordered, prevented reply, but Kerry's eyes flashed and he could hardly restrain his eagerness to hear what Patrice had to suggest.

"First, it might be well for you to seek out the old Virginian. He has no cause to suspect

you, and your meeting after that fray was, you told me, kindly."

"Without doubt. As I said, when I went to Carmichael Hall with the tidings of his son's affair, I was most hospitably received and—"

"Stay, Kerry; there is one point which I confess I do not understand. Did Colin Carmichael know that it was *your* quarrel, or did you permit him to suppose — we will put it delicately — to suppose that the man whom Nugent killed was both the culprit and the victim?"

Kerry's eyes fell before the biting sarcasm of her tone. It was an ignoble part, this, of traitor, and it had never seemed so wholly so as at that moment.

"Would you have had me throw all my cards on the table?" he said roughly.

"Perhaps not, but I own to a preference for a bolder game."

"You forget that I came to America to get the 'Luck,' Patrice, and open measures would have been worse than useless. Besides, what care we how it is obtained, the point is—"

"To secure it," she interrupted impatiently, as for a moment her spirit revolted against the treachery she had planned. But the thought of Nugent as she had seen him, standing with his hand in that of another woman (and that woman beautiful and clever as herself), strengthened her determination. It was too much magnanimity to ask of that passionately jealous heart; the Celt's half-savage lust for revenge burned in her eyes, and she went on as recklessly as she had begun. "There is one thing, however, which may be news to you. Nugent Carmichael is now in New York."

"Damnation! And you have kept it from me?" cried Kerry furiously, half-rising from his chair. "Do you call this keeping faith with me?"

"If you take that tone, Kerry, I will leave you at once." Then, as he leaned over and touched her hand, "Give me credit for at least ordinary foresight. Had you known of his coming, you would have been at his throat and — I told you I would have no more bloodshed."

"And pray, where is he?"

"I do not know. Steady, Kerry," raising her hand, "he is coming to see me —"

"When?" with deadly emphasis.

"I do not intend to tell you. Be quiet, and listen until I have finished."

The attendant, appearing just at that moment, caused Kerry to fume in silence until his departure, when Patrice leaned back in her chair and laughed mockingly.

"'T is something more difficult than I had imagined to give you advice, but if you wish my aid it must be given in my own way. Is it possible for you to gain an interview with Colin Carmichael? We both saw him the day of the Inauguration as he passed us in a coach on Broadway; can you find out where he is quartered?"

"Doubtless," said Kerry, regaining his self-control with an effort. "Carmichael is well known in the city; probably your landlord, the proprietor of the 'Rose and Crown,' can inform you."

"Go to Carmichael, Kerry, and by every art in your power persuade him to believe that Nugent stole the 'Luck' when he left Virginia,

thus adding to his delinquency, and you will effectually prevent any reconciliation which might occur by a chance meeting between the two. And above all, avoid meeting Nugent yourself; if it comes to the worst, can you not have him imprisoned on the old charge, or, better still, kidnap him until his father returns to Virginia?"

"A clever plan," agreed Kerry grimly. "Leave the ways and means to me."

"Then," Patrice went on eagerly, "you must bring every effort to bear upon finding the jewel, so essential to our success. Find it we *must*, and when found, then, hurrah! for dear old Ireland; and trust me to obtain the fortune from the Nugent don—and, who knows but the estates as well? I have been known to conquer men before!"

She paused, breathless with excitement, and drained another glass of wine which Kerry poured for her with a hand that trembled as it touched hers.

"I have learned something else with which to aid your search," she went on; "to-day I ran one clue to earth most unexpectedly. You

said there were three masks at the Apthorpe ball who wore a yellow domino. I can tell you who one wearer was beside myself."

"Good!" he ejaculated eagerly.

"It was Mistress Faith Wolcott."

"Not the new beauty—the daughter of General Oliver Wolcott?"

"Do you know her?" suspiciously. "And who, pray, is the officer you name?"

"I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance, but I almost knocked her down yesterday morning when leaving the 'Rose and Crown,' though, faith! in spite of her reputation for beauty, her companion was ten times as lovely as she, to my thinking, even if she belongs to a family famous for that same. I asked the draper's assistant her name, which is as far as our acquaintance has progressed."

But Kerry had blundered, for he had changed the identity of the two, and gave to Peggy the prestige of beauty not rightfully hers.

"It now remains for us to find the third yellow domino," said Patrice.

She did not propose to betray her own carelessness in having given the wrong domino to

Dopple, but resolved that by close questioning she would ascertain from the maid information which had evidently been concealed by her.

"By St. Patrick!" exclaimed Kerry, with sudden recollection, "the third must have been the domino whom I encountered and addressed, taking her for Dopple."

"You did?" Patrice's surprise at this statement warned him that the ground was slippery. "And why should you seek out Dopple, or imagine she was allowed to present herself at my ball?"

"You forget," returned Kerry, whose native audacity almost equaled Patrice's own. "I saw the twin dominos in your dressing-room before you left it,—indeed, I am not sure that you did not hand them to me to carry for you out to your chariot,—and it would be like you to plan confusion for everybody (even your humble servant) by having the maid wear one."

"You are the Devil's own for guessing," laughed Patrice, her suspicion allayed by the smoothness of his ready invention. "And now that you and I have planned our campaign, I

must get me back to the 'Rose and Crown.' Indeed, I verily believe that we are, as usual, the last and latest to leave this very agreeable hostelry. We will essay it again whenever there be plans to discuss."

So saying the O'Halloran, beautiful and triumphant, swept her way to the door with her customary grace, followed by Kerry, and stepping into her chariot, they were rolled away from the tavern.

But they were not the last, or latest, guest at the King's Arms that evening, for as soon as the rustle of Patrice's gown had passed down the room, the curtains of the box next that which she had occupied parted, and an officer in full uniform issued from it, to whom his attendant bowed obsequiously as he ushered him to the door.

"It is a very pretty plot," swore De Valdemont, as he walked swiftly down Broadway; "*mais, sacré nom!* M'lle Patrice, 't is a game at which two can play."

CHAPTER XIV

Wheels within Wheels

"IS Nicholas Staats within?"

"He should be, sir, although he may have gone to the coffee-house just below. Will it please you to sit for a moment, while I look into his room?"

Nugent declined the ancient chair offered him by the lad, and was pacing the small vestibule of the theatre somewhat impatiently when the thin treble of the old doorkeeper spoke through the little window behind which Nicholas dispensed billets for stalls and boxes.

"What can I do for your worship? Ah, sir," recognizing him, "are you not the young blade who took coffee with me early on Inauguration Day?"

"Yes, good Nicholas, and if you are not over-busy at present I would like a chat with you," lowering his voice, as he stood at the window, "where we are secure from listeners —you understand."

Nicholas climbed off his high stool with more alacrity than Nugent had given him credit for possessing, and unlocking the door of his small den drew his visitor inside.

"You are welcome, sir," he said; "in what way can I serve you? I am free from duty here for an hour, for the quality hardly ever send, or call, for stalls before midday, and the rehearsal to-day is not called until one o'clock. Perhaps," — seeing Nugent's glance toward the window which, having no glass, was hardly a place for confidential conversation, — "perhaps, if it be anything of import, your worship would walk down with me to the coffee-house where I have my lodgings, just above the coffee-room?"

"I think that would be more satisfactory," answered Nugent, and the old man promptly seized his hat and followed him into John Street. "From what you hinted that day I gather that you were present the night — "

"Yes, sir, yes," interrupted Nicholas, looking nervously behind him. "I will tell you all that I recollect as soon as we gain my room. Pardon my caution, but somehow, of late, I

have had disagreeable forebodings; here we are, sir," slipping past the yellow sign, and entering a door at the side of the public entrance; "up just one flight, and turn to the right."

Nugent, obeying instructions, presently found himself in a small but very clean apartment, lighted by two cheerful dormer windows with tiny panes of glass, whose furniture, though scanty, was of colonial mahogany scrupulously polished. Nicholas drew out the armchair for his visitor, and then seated himself upon a sofa which evidently served him as a bed at night.

"I have never forgotten you, sir," he began, "and I have often wondered where you might be, and whether you would ever return to New York. I was standing in the wings, waiting for a chance to have a word with the little French lady (for we all admired her, she was so dainty and well-behaved), when I saw, but did not hear, the insult given her which you so gallantly resented."

"Alas, with what a conclusion!" Nugent could not suppress a sigh as the scene rushed back upon him. "On which side of the stage

were you? Stay, of course you were at the left, or you would have heard that scoundrel's words."

"Yes, sir, and it was next me that Peter (that 's what we players called the Frenchman) stood when your adversary jostled against him. It was all so quick, and yet, I am mortal certain the Englishman did it with the intention of escaping your sword's point."

"By heavens! can you swear to that?" cried Nugent.

"Why, yes, were it needed. But, sir," — the old man's voice sank to a low whisper, and his hand trembled as he laid it on Nugent's arm, — "did you never think that perchance Peter *might* have survived? Though they all cried out that the wound was mortal, I can tell you something of what came after."

"If you can, old man, you will merit my lifelong gratitude and that of my dear father."

Nicholas nodded. His eyes grew brighter as he proceeded with his story.

"I always wondered why you vanished, even though I surmised that 't was the British officers who over-persuaded you, for no good

patriot, as you were, sir, ever fled before a Tory. You do not know what lay underneath, nor what prompted those who did to hush up the matter by giving out that Peter was dead and you a self-confessed criminal."

"Self-confessed?" Nugent started from his seat, his eyes blazing. "How dared any one give tongue to such a lie? 'T was a duel, in defense of a woman, and D'Anvers's death, so far as I was concerned, an accident."

"It was your flight that seemed to give confession, sir. You did not know that Peter was a spy —"

"A spy! In whose service?"

"The Committee of Safety, sir. He was a young French engineer employed by the patriots to make maps of any and all British defenses surrounding New York, and to avert suspicion he had taken a position with the company at this theatre (being a fairly good amateur), which gave him many opportunities for obtaining information unsuspected."

"By God! Nicholas, this is brave news for me."

"Aye, sir, and you might have known as

much the other morning had you but given me a chance to speak of the old affair," said Nicholas, with a smile. "Young blood is ever impatient. But you have not heard all that I can tell you, even yet. Peter was always a favorite among us, and at that time he shared this room with me, and when he fell, bleeding profusely, I was first to gain his side.

"'Air,' he gasped, as I knelt down beside him, while the others ran for a surgeon, and the women fled weeping into the greenroom. 'Find papers . . . under mattress . . . my bed . . .' I pressed his hand, and he made a desperate effort to finish his speech, for he knew he could trust me. 'Deliver to . . . General Washington . . .' Then he rolled over, and we thought him gone. But luckily for Peter, the surgeon who came in haste happened to be a member of the Committee of Safety, and I helped him carry what the rest thought was a dead man to a cart at the door, and we spirited Peter off so suddenly that no one at the theatre had any suspicion that he was either alive or a spy in the service of the patriots."

"And what became of him? Where is he now, and how can I make your testimony available?" demanded Nugent impetuously. "Do you think the miserable scoundrel to whom I owe my exile, and all the long sequence of events which befell me, had any idea that D'Anvers was *not* a victim of his infamous conduct?"

"Patience, sir, patience; I cannot reply all at once;" and looking up, Nugent saw that the old man was trembling with excitement.

"Here," he pulled a flask from his pocket. "This is good French brandy, and will be of service; take it, man, at once;" and presently he had the satisfaction of seeing the color return to Nicholas's pale cheeks, as he continued his tale.

"Peter lay hidden for two months in a small house on Water Street, down by the East River, and the patriots, when he recovered sufficiently, ran him out of the city, where I do not know, though I am sure it was a good distance away. And the plans, which I found where he had hidden them, went by a safe hand to General Washington."

With a glad smile, which seemed to throw off the burden of years, Nugent sprang to his feet. "You have restored my youth," he cried, laying his hand affectionately upon the old man's shoulder, "and you will not find me backward in proving my gratitude. But if you can add to your kindness by finding D'Anvers's present whereabouts, so that we can perhaps have speech with him, it will be all that I require to give my father proof of how I must have been belied."

"I will try and find the surgeon, sir, and perhaps, now that there is no necessity for concealment of his position, you could persuade Peter—pardon me, I always think of him by that name—to return to New York."

"And can you see this gentleman at once?"

"Give me twenty-four hours, sir; he is now an old man, and seldom stirs from home. I must seek him at the old rendezvous in Water Street, and if it please you to stop at the theatre after the play to-morrow night I may have news for you."

The two men went slowly down the stairs,

and at its foot Nugent bade cordial farewell to his new-found ally; then he turned into Broadway on his way to Macben's, where he had taken a room for his convenience during his brief stay on shore.

Nicholas Staats proceeded leisurely along on his return to the theatre, but when nearly there he stopped short, and struck his forehead in evident consternation.

"Fool that I was!" he ejaculated, half-aloud, "I forgot to tell him that the knave of the tragedy is even now in the city. Judging from his black looks the other night he may be plotting some fresh deviltry connected with his former attempt. 'Forewarned is forearmed,' they say, and I'll not fail to give warning of danger to that brave young gentleman to-morrow. I'll warrant there will be no 'dodging' for the knave when next that gallant meets him face to face."

While Nugent Carmichael was swinging his way with joyful heart toward William Street his lovely sweetheart was having a by no means happy half-hour. For true to her resolve, Miss Moppet had coaxed her sister Betty

to her own room, where, seated on a high stool which was usually her point of vantage, she proceeded to pour her tale of adventure into Mistress Yorke's astounded ears somewhat after this fashion: —

"You see, Betty, I suppose it was very naughty — though I must say 't was the humor of it that appealed to me — "

"It usually is," sighed Betty, with a mischievous twinkle.

"And so before going to the Apthorpe ball I slipped into the Indian maid's gown under my domino (you remember it? — the one I made for our play up in Litchfield) instead of the ball-gown you desired me to wear, and then, when I met a mask whom I took to be De Grammont, I spoke to him in French, and somehow we both got quite in the spirit of the ball; and I went out on the lawn under the oaks, and danced — oh! do not interrupt me, Betty, or I shall never have courage to tell you all of it. It really was most amusing," — here Miss Moppet broke into laughter, — "for he was so dismayed when I fled around the trees and left him there alone."

"And then?" asked Betty, biting her lips to keep from joining in the laugh.

"Then I flew back into the mansion, and looking for my pink domino I snatched up some one else's instead. It was bright yellow, and it must have been bewitched, for it led me into all manner of adventures. We were attacked by footpads, and oh! Betty, I shot at one of them,—and he tumbled down,—and then I dragged my companion into the chariot, and Pompey drove like the wind back into town. Do not try to look severe and disapproving; you had your romance, Betty Wolcott,"— vehemently, —"and why should I not have mine? For Geoffrey Yorke is not one bit braver, or handsomer, or more gallant than my own true love, Nugent Carmichael." And tumbling off her high stool, seizing Betty around the waist, as she sat dumb with amazement at this bewildering harangue, Miss Moppet burst into most unwonted tears.

"Moppet, Moppet!" gasped Betty, throwing her arms around her. "Nugent Carmichael! What *are* you saying? Did I not tell you only the other day his most pathetic story

—and oh, Moppet," reproachfully, "you never told me then that you knew him—though how in Heaven's name you have managed to fetch him back—"

"I did *not*," said a voice, struggling between sobs and laughter; "how could I? He came back to prove his innocence—and I am going to help him do so—"

"Then stand up and tell me all about it," said Betty, giving the culprit a little shake as she spoke, her own eyes growing moist at the recollection of the days when Miss Moppet was her only confidante and comforter. "So he was at the ball,—ah!" quick-witted Betty caught the clue; "then Comte de Valdemont knows him, and we can learn all we wish in that way from him. But what did you say about footpads? Verily, my brain begins to whirl at the possibilities of romance which you suggest."

"Romance!" sighed Miss Moppet, "there is plenty of it and to spare. There is a locket—such a wonderful one, Betty, set with diamonds and a big, big emerald, called the 'Luck of Rathcoole,' which I have obligingly lost,

Heaven knows how;—and a prophecy, several hundred years old, with curses and lovers in it. You must let Nugent tell you all about that. Do you think we could dare tell Colin Carmichael that his son has come back? Oh, Betty, Betty, you never were in such a coil as I am, and between us we must try and find out the truth, for I love Nugent Carmichael with all my heart and soul, and when I say *that* you know nothing can stay or change me, for like all the Wolcotts, *I know what I want, and I mean what I say!*"

CHAPTER XV

"*A Moi! Touraine!*"

ESS Madame Yorke in ze *maison* — zat is, what you call, at 'ome?"

"Yes, Marse Commodore," said the negro footman, recognizing the navy uniform and bestowing the highest title he could think of upon its wearer. "Please, sah, walk into de drawin'-room an' I 'll take yo' card to de ladies."

"Non," returned De Valdemont, pausing an instant before following the servant, "eet is Madame Yorke zat I wish to see, herself, yes. For ze ladies I will have zer honor to ask anozer day."

The footman hesitated, catching a glimpse of a sweeping train upon the staircase, and Betty, descending, gave De Valdemont welcome, and herself ushered him inside the room, to his great relief, for endeavoring to acquire the English language was De Valdemont's

only drawback to enjoyment during his visit to New York, and Betty's fluent French had charmed him at their first meeting.

"Good fortune attends me, madame," said the Count, after their first greetings were over. "I have not had the happiness to find you since my melancholy *contre-temps* at your dinner. I have sent daily to inquire for the health of Monsieur Carmichael, and, if it be quite agreeable to him, I would be charmed to pay my respects to-day, and apologize to him in person for my most unconscious intrusion into a family quarrel."

"Geoffrey, my husband, has given your most courteous messages to him, monsieur, but will you pardon me for saying that I fear it would agitate him to see you, as he has not yet quite recovered his usual health."

"Another day, then," returned De Valdemont; "whenever you consider it prudent to allow me to do so. I shall be more than glad to see him again, for he has the noble air, as we call it, and I am pained beyond words to have caused him anguish."

"Monsieur," Betty hesitated for a second,

and her color rose, "would you think me intrusive if I ask you a few questions in regard to a matter which troubles me," — again she hesitated, wishing to preserve Miss Moppet's secret. "You spoke in such glowing terms of the incident you related that I think, perhaps, you have personal knowledge of its hero, Nugent Carmichael?"

"Ah, madame," the Count's ready sympathy spoke in his voice and gesture, "is it that you wish to ask me of my *friend*" — with emphasis — "of my friend, Nugent Carmichael, whom I love and esteem beyond most men of my acquaintance?"

Betty clasped her hands with all the enthusiasm of her girlhood. "In that case, monsieur," she exclaimed, "I can confide my difficulty to you. I have just been told that Nugent is in New York — "

"But you do not know, I think, that he is my guest upon La Touraine," interrupted De Valdemont. "He is in search of evidence regarding the unfortunate affair which caused his exile."

Betty heaved a sigh of relief. "Then you

consider there is a chance of his clearing his good name?"

"Without doubt, madame, and moreover I am aware that at the present moment he has a most active and dangerous enemy here who is determined to injure him."

"Indeed! And that enemy—?"

"Is a man of whom I have knowledge, not greatly to his credit, in Paris. I have not yet had an opportunity to warn Nugent of his presence in New York as he has not been on board La Touraine since yesterday, but I expect him to return before night, and have left word with my *maître d'équipage* that, should Nugent again come ashore during my absence, he is to follow him at a discreet distance and be ready to aid him should he need assistance. This information, madame, I must ask you to regard as strictly confidential."

"Of course I promise," cried Betty, with quickened breath. "Oh, Count, if we can but effect a reconciliation between father and son — so much hangs in the balance! If I can aid you, count on me to any extent, but — I beg you do not betray my interest to Nugent;

at least, not at present." Then Betty's color heightened, as she suddenly realized that in her anxiety to preserve her sister's secret she was giving the gallant Frenchman a suggestion of personal interest which might end by compromising her in his estimation. That was not to be endured, especially not by brave little Betty Yorke; and before the Count could reply, she added, with the sweet dignity which was all her own, "I am not at liberty to give you the name of one whose heart is most deeply concerned in this investigation, and whose interests I must protect, for they are dear to me as my own."

"*Brava!*" thought De Valdemont, as he bowed low over the hand she extended to him. "It is not the charming madame, but the beautiful sister — that naughty coquette — *pardieu!*" But aloud, he said: "Madame's confidence shall be most jealously guarded, and I will inform you of any further facts which I may ascertain. Shall I have the very great pleasure to meet you at the President's Levée this evening?"

"I am ashamed to confess that it had quite

slipped my memory; it is the first, and of course every one will be present. Until then, Count, *au revoir*, with my hearty thanks for the relief that this interview has brought me."

General Washington's weekly levées, which were to begin that night, had been eagerly anticipated by society, and proved to be very stately and beautiful entertainments according to the ideas of the period. They began at eight o'clock and ended at eleven, and his house on Franklin Street was filled with all the beauty and fashion that New York could boast. Miss Moppet, however, who usually found everything in the way of a party exciting, was, to Peggy's surprise, apparently somewhat indifferent to this one, and accordingly she ventured to express a little wonder at her friend's lack of interest.

"I am told that we will find very stately manners to-night," said Peggy, engaged in sewing silver buckles on her white slippers. "Is it true that the President and Madam Washington receive upon a dais, slightly raised, and that we make a low curtsy as we pass, as they do in London? If so, is that not more

like the customs of a Court than a truly American fashion?"

"Yes," said Miss Moppet, who was idly drawing small sketches on a sheet of paper, and whose thoughts had transported her back to the Lispenard Meadows. "Oh!" with a start, "a dais, did you say? Well, why not? Is not our President worthy of the highest respect we can pay him? And for my part I much prefer a curtsy to any other mode of salutation."

"Sometimes a kiss of one's finger-tips is permissible," said Peggy primly, dropping her eyes as she caught Moppet's glance.

"Is that according to Aunt Anneke?" demanded that mischievous maid, — "or, more likely, according to Philip? And" — teasingly — "did she — or he — state when such a salutation was quite proper?"

"He said nothing whatever," began Peggy warmly. "He only — "

"Kissed them!" laughed Moppet. "Oh, Peggy, Peggy, — you are greatly improved by a short sojourn in this wicked, naughty world of New York."

But Peggy, having learned by experience that silence was her only defense when Miss Moppet's lively tongue began to tease, tucked her slippers under her arm and fled out of the room.

Miss Moppet returned to her drawing with a chuckle of amusement. "I should be ashamed to tease her," she said aloud. "I am so happy — so wondrous happy myself — that I must needs wish to have Peggy equally so, save that Philip's love-making and Nugent's" — here Moppet blushed at the memory of her surrender — "Nugent's methods are — "

But what Miss Moppet thought of them, she declined even to whisper to the four walls of her room as she sprang to her feet and summoned Miranda, with whose assistance she finally descended in time to start with the others to the President's Levée.

Peggy, having made her prettiest curtsy to the Chief Executive, and received a kindly smile from him and Madam Washington, passed on, and had her usual ill-luck in becoming separated from Betty and Miss Moppet; but, drifting into the next room, she was

relieved to find herself greeted by Mr. Gulian Verplanck, who was Betty's brother-in-law, having married her elder sister, Clarissa.

Now Gulian Verplanck, who had been the hottest of Tory sympathizers during the occupation of New York by the British, had always kept in touch with every new arrival from London. He had resided there for a year before his marriage, mingling in society, and in especial was he careful to retain all acquaintance with any scion of English nobility. Therefore, when an Englishman, recently arrived, presented himself with a letter of introduction from the Earl of Westmeath, Gulian endeavored to show him every attention in his power, and by way of a fine beginning, asked for and received a card of invitation for him to attend the President's Levée.

"And where, pray, is Betty and her party?" asked Gulian, as Peggy gave him good-evening. "I have here a gentleman just arrived from London bearing letters of introduction to me. I present to you," turning to a tall dark stranger at his elbow, "Mr. Fitzgerald —"

Here some one jostled against Gulian, provoking him into an ejaculation more emphatic than polite, and before he could pronounce Peggy's name, Kerry, with his easy, insinuating Irish grace, said quickly:—

"We have met before, madam, and I beg to again offer my apologies for nearly knocking you down in that open door."

"Oh, do not mention it, sir," said Peggy, blushing and smiling at the very evident admiration in Kerry's bold blue eyes; "it was but for a moment, and I felt no injury. Do you find New York very different from London? I hope you may enjoy your sojourn here."

From which it will be seen that Peggy had acquired both wisdom and experience since her first ball; could it be possible that she was developing a desire for flirtations?

"I find New York possesses most beautiful women," went on Kerry, "and if they will but be kind I shall, in all probability, prolong my stay. And of your family I have heard much; the 'lovely Wolcotts,' as you are called, are known even across the water."

"'Wolcotts'!" exclaimed Peggy, with a bewildered smile. "Oh, aye, they are equally lovely, but each in a different way."

"Faith, she can appropriate plain open flattery, small doubt," was Kerry's amused reflection. But he went on aloud, unabashed, "And may I ask, was it one of your sisters who accompanied you to the 'Rose and Crown'?"

"Oh, no,"—Peggy's eyes brightened,—"that was Mistress Faith Wolcott—"

"Indeed!" ejaculated Kerry, for once completely taken aback.

"She is my dearest and most intimate friend," pursued Peggy, paying no attention to his interruption. "I am stopping with her and Mistress Yorke. They will be coming this way shortly; would you like, sir, to be presented?"

"I? Oh, 't is time enough; let me talk with you," returned Kerry gallantly. "And so we have one thing in common at once."

"What may that be?" asked Peggy, thinking that the newcomer was even more rapid in his method of improving acquaintance than Philip had been.

"We are both strangers, and therefore can see many things that perhaps are unnoticed by the dwellers here. Are you stopping for the season?"

"For part of it." Peggy began to think she did not quite approve of Kerry's air of intimacy, as he quietly possessed himself of her fan, which he used for her with the dexterity of a practiced hand. "Mistress Wolcott and I are bidden for a visit, shortly, to Carmichael Hall in Virginia, and for my part I am most eager to visit an estate in the South."

Kerry gave her a quick look, which she failed to see.

"Carmichael Hall? I was there some years ago. Is Colin Carmichael still living there in the same state as of old? I must contrive to look him up; he is a fine example of the noblest Scotch gentleman."

Peggy laughed gently. "You may not have to go so far as Virginia," she said. "He is at present a guest with me at Mistress Yorke's."

"I have taken the first pawn in the game, and now to storm the outworks of the castle," thought Kerry triumphantly.

And he proceeded to put his thought into instant action, making such desperate love to Peggy that the demure little maid positively thrilled with excitement, thinking that for once she had beaten Miss Moppet at her own game. Philip Van Cortlandt, who had been watching the flirtation with much surprise and growing indignation, finally joined the pair, and Peggy shyly introduced the two men.

Kerry, seized with one of his perverse changes of mood, straightway perceived that Philip would far rather monopolize the fair Peggy than talk *à trois;* therefore he persisted in remaining beside them and making flattering speeches to Peggy, while slow-moving Philip fairly gritted his teeth with rage. Kerry was also determined to meet Mistress Faith Wolcott, and in some way contrive to secure an invitation to visit the Yorke household, and thus meet Colin Carmichael. Presently, to Peggy's relief, as the men's attitude was becoming strained and she was getting beyond her depth, Miss Moppet, accompanied by De Grammont, came through the doorway, and

seeing her friend at once joined the group. But Kerry's hope of some conversation with her was nipped in the bud, for as Peggy began her formal introduction she got no farther than "Mistress Wolcott, I present to you Mr. Fitzgerald,"—when Moppet, looking full in his face, and realizing that the mountebank stood before her, executed her most stately curtsy, and laying her hand on De Grammont's arm, swept down the room without a backward glance.

Like a flash it had dawned upon her that Nugent's enemy stood before her; had he not said to the O'Halloran in her hearing at the Apthorpe ball, "Would I had him at my sword's point *again*"? And tingling with excitement in every nerve Miss Moppet listened and smiled at De Grammont's light badinage, of which she was never able afterward to recall one syllable.

The first Presidential Levée went on to its conclusion, but about the same hour that the guests were bidding President and Madam Washington adieu, a ship's gig was rowed to the foot of Crown Street and Nugent Car-

michael sprang out upon the wharf, and, after giving a few hurried directions to the boatswain, went rapidly up the street and reached the theatre just as Nicholas Staats was about locking the door of his little room, preparatory to leaving it for the night.

"I will be ready in a moment, sir," said Nicholas, beaming kindly upon him with a glance which Nugent read as a harbinger of good news; "step inside. There is no one left in the theatre except the lad, Hans, and me, and I have only to lock this drawer." Nugent entered, and, having securely fastened his desk, Nicholas said, "I have seen the old gentleman, Dr. Rutgers, and it will not be necessary for you to seek him, sir, as I have obtained all the facts which he can give me."

"And those?" Nugent's voice trembled; so much hung upon the answer.

The old man peered up into his face by the light of a small lamp, and, placing his hand respectfully on his shoulder, said:—

"I rejoice to tell you, sir, that I was right in my suspicions. Peter lives, and can be reached as soon as Dr. Rutgers can find a letter which

he received from him about six months since."

"God be thanked!" Nugent bared his head reverently, and then seized the old man's hand and wrung it fervently. "Let me accompany you home," he added. "The street is not overwell lit, and after walking with you I will rejoin my ship."

"Do not trouble to escort me, sir, I am accustomed to going alone, and every one hereabouts knows me."

But Nugent persisted, and even accompanied the kindly old doorkeeper upstairs to his room, and was about bidding him goodnight when Nicholas said slowly, "I cannot let you leave me, sir, without giving you warning that the man whom you fought that night is here in New York."

"Here!" Nugent's voice was ominously quiet, but his eyes lit with excitement. "Are you sure?"

"Aye, sir; for I have seen him. I was standing at the back of the stage three nights ago and saw him cross to the greenroom. I have never forgotten that dark face, and I drew

back so that he did not perceive me. But I watched, and he came out later with Mistress O'Halloran—"

"Patrice!" The exclamation left Nugent's lips almost unconsciously. "Have you seen him since then at the theatre?"

"Only at night, sir, as he never comes there until in time to escort Mistress O'Halloran after the play. Oh, sir, do beware of him."

"I am exceedingly indebted to you for your warning," with kindly emphasis. "It is most important that I be upon my guard. I will seek you again to-morrow;" and again bidding Nicholas good-night Nugent left the coffee-house and turned rapidly into Crown Street. But at the junction of Broadway, which divided it, Crown Street ran both east and west, and Nugent, busy with exultant thought, and realizing how near he was to all that life held dear for him, unconsciously turned east instead of west, and had progressed quite a distance toward the East River when he was suddenly struck by the appearance of the houses, which were small and straggling; he stopped and surveyed them more closely. As he did so, his

keen ear caught the sound of footsteps—footsteps that seemed at once swift and stealthy. He laid his hand quickly where his sword usually hung; then recollecting that he was not in uniform and therefore unarmed, he wheeled in his tracks and started in the right direction to reach the ship's gig. But it was too late; as he passed a very tumbledown structure two men darted from behind an alleyway and laid grasp on his shoulder, and while striking blindly upward, Nugent's voice rang out on the stillness of the night:—

"*À moi, Touraine! À moi!*"

A well-directed blow of his clenched fist laid one assailant low, as he shook off the grasping arm, and again his cry for aid sounded clear and far-reaching—

"*Touraine, à moi!*"

With fierce curses the ruffians, whose numbers had been increased, sprang upon him; a blanket was thrust violently over his face and head as another blow struck him from behind, a thousand stars seemed to blaze before his eyes, and he knew no more.

CHAPTER XVI

The Way of the Transgressor

MISS MOPPET sat in her room, the morning after the levee in, it must be confessed, what was for her a thoroughly vexed state of mind. And as she idly executed one stroke after another in her sketch-book instead of going seriously to work upon a water-color sketch which she was making against Betty's birthday, she was thinking of Nugent's story and the very perplexing disappearance of the "Luck" from her keeping. The present cause of vexation was her anxiety for a chat with Betty, to whom as yet she had had no opportunity for relating her encounter with the mountebank at the levee, for Mistress Betty, being a model housewife, was spending the morning in giving orders and overlooking sundry details which were dry, uninteresting, and provoking when Moppet felt such passing need of confidential outpouring. Peggy, pleading a headache, had breakfasted in her room;

and when Moppet offered to stay and talk with her she had begged that mischievous maid to depart and leave her in peace, in a voice whose tone of injured dignity and patient resignation had caused Moppet's eyes to open to their widest extent as she hastily returned to her own room. And so she went on scribbling, and somehow it was a name which came slipping from her pencil, unconsciously, as she was trying to practice patience until Betty should find leisure, and after she had written the same word several times she glanced down at it.

"Now, why did I write that?" she asked herself. "'T is the name of the Frenchman, D'Anvers, that I have been scribbling."

Then looking at it more closely, she gave a gasp, for twice the faintly penciled word in place of being written as a French name looked up at her from the paper as a good English one — Danvers! Miss Moppet gazed at it with dilated eyes.

"Why, this is passing strange," she said, half aloud; "indeed, 't is weirdly so. Danvers — that is the name of my nice quaint French professor who taught Betty and me up in

Litchfield town for two winters. I bethink me that Oliver told us some story about his having served the patriots' cause well, and that he had taken the English way of spelling his name as a disguise, and being very poor was glad of the pupils we procured for him. Is it possible that I have discovered a great secret and that my little professor away up in Litchfield is the very man that Nugent needs so sorely?" So saying she sprang from her seat as the door opened and Betty came hurriedly into the room.

"Oh, Betty, Betty, I am tired to death awaiting you," cried Moppet, waving the sheet of paper, which she had hastily torn from her book, before her. "I do believe I may have a clue." Her eager voice fell. "Are you going forth at once? Indeed, indeed, I can wait no longer, for I have much to say and no one but you to confide in."

"That is why I am come, for I find I am due at the Lewis's in fifteen minutes; so I ordered the chariot that I might hurry there and back," smiled Betty, who, though she assumed matronly airs, was in reality Miss

Moppet's abject slave except where Geoffrey Yorke was concerned. "What new discovery have you made, for you look quite wild and excited?"

"Excited!" echoed Moppet indignantly. "Have I not ample cause, with a lover in jeopardy, and several mysteries on my hands — all in two weeks' time, forsooth!"

"Forgive me!" Betty leaned over and kissed the dimpled cheek. "How can I help you at this moment?"

"See." Moppet displayed the scribbled name, and with comforting alacrity Betty agreed that perhaps it might be a valuable discovery. Miss Moppet looked askance at the doubt, but eagerly proceeded with her story of the introduction to Fitzgerald at the levee.

"Are you sure, Moppet, that 't is the same man?" Betty was interested now. "Gulian brought him up and presented him to me, and I found him passing agreeable, though rather too full of Irish blarney and compliment to quite please me."

"That is what Peggy said concerning him coming home, though, good lack! I could

get little out of her as to their long interview."

"And as we were leaving, Gulian whispered something about his being a titled — but Gulian is always title-mad, and I paid so little attention to it that I did not even catch the name."

"Title, or no title, Betty, he is the man who was talking to the O'Halloran at the ball, and who afterwards spoke to me — taking me for some one else, I do not know who —"

"Spoke to you?" exclaimed Betty.

"Yes, Betty, for I had put on a yellow domino, instead of my own, and he spoke of a bribe — money that he had given me —"

"Will I ever get to the last of your adventures!" sighed Betty. "But whether he was the mountebank or not, you will be surprised at one thing — he asked my permission to call and see Colin Carmichael —"

"Oh, Betty, Betty! — And you gave it?"

"Of course; how could I refuse? But he gave no day or hour, and therefore I have said nothing to our guest on the subject, although I saw him for but a moment, and ascertained that he had a good night and is so much im-

proved that in a day or two he expects to be downstairs again. And now I must fly to keep my engagement. Are you going forth this morning?"

"No," Miss Moppet colored, "not at present. I am writing a note to send by Pompey when you return."

"And, pray, where do you send it?"

"To Macben's, Betty; surely I told you that is where I can communicate with Nugent?"

Betty shook her head ruefully. "We must find a way out of this coil," she said. "What would Geoffrey, or Oliver, say to such concealment?"

"Betty, Betty," Miss Moppet's voice trembled, "surely *you* are not blaming me?"

"Not I," declared Betty stoutly. "Alas! I gave you a bad enough example when I let a British officer escape from Wolcott Manor and allowed you to help me;" flying to the door; then from the threshold, "I am taking Molly with me; please have an eye to Noll when he comes downstairs."

As soon as the door closed safely upon Betty, Miss Moppet drew a paper from her

gown, where it had lain safely hidden, and after reading it for the seventh time, was presently lost to the world as she set about writing a reply, a process attended with many pauses, gay laughter, and (for was it not her first love-letter?) the punctuation of an occasional kiss.

In the hall below, half an hour later, the big brass knocker sounded, and Jupiter, the footman, replied with due speed, after the second rap.

"Yes, sah," he responded to the inquiry of the visitor, "Cunnel Carmichael am stoppin' in de house, but he have been very ill, an' doan hab the pleasure ob commin' downstairs."

"But I think he might see me," said Kerry insinuatingly. "I am an old friend, and if you will take my card to him" — placing it with a gold coin attached in the outstretched hand — "you can ask the question, and I will await the answer."

"Yes, marse, yes; thank yo', sah. Dar ain't no reason why I caynt take the cayrd; ef yo' please, sah, will you take a seat in de drawin'-room." And he led the way, and having pro-

vided Kerry with a chair, vanished up the staircase.

Jupiter, being young and newly introduced into service, was not yet graduated in the polite ways of denial, and whereas Pompey, his instructor, would have dismissed the visitor with apologies, or gone upstairs and (in Betty's absence) have consulted Miss Moppet before presenting the card to Carmichael, Jupiter ventured directly into the room where the guest was seated and laid it on his desk.

"De gen'men is below, sah," he announced. "What shall I say to him?"

Colin Carmichael picked up the bit of pasteboard, looked at it for a moment, and then laid it down.

"If Mr. Fitzgerald will visit me in my chamber," he said slowly, "I will see him — at once."

There was a stern emphasis upon the last words which gave Jupiter the sensation of a cold douche, and added alacrity to his descent, when, having delivered an affirmative answer to Kerry, he swiftly showed him upstairs, opened the door, and then fled below, where

it required persistent fingering of the gold-piece to counteract the remembrance of Carmichael's fiery eyes.

"It is some years since we met, sir," was Carmichael's cold salutation, as he bowed in response to Kerry's courteous greeting. "When did you return to America, and to what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"Faith, sir, if that be your tone, I may make good-day follow my entrance," exclaimed Kerry, with a readiness to take offense which stirred Carmichael to reply.

"There is no need for haste. As you have invited this interview I conclude that you have some reason for seeking it. Pray, be seated."

"We parted good friends, sir," returned Kerry, satisfied with his first shot, and throwing himself into a chair with easy nonchalance. "I trust time has been kind to you in the matter of health and strength?"

"I am not conscious of losing either," said Carmichael dryly; "and as to our parting, I ever speed a guest with due courtesy. Possibly had you remained a day longer under my roof

my patience in that regard would have been somewhat tried."

"I fail to grasp your meaning, sir. In what way have I earned your displeasure?"

"You may consider it a mere peccadillo, sir, scarce worth mentioning — but as a piece of my property found its way into your dispatch bag, — come, sir; what have you done with the 'Luck of Rathcoole'?" And the old Scotchman struck the table with a hand of no uncertain vigor as he asked the question.

"Your property?" gasped Kerry. "You must be mad! Pray, what evidence have you that I have dishonored your hospitality? And how dare you charge me with the theft of a family jewel? Though, for the matter of that," with a sneer, which even a belated sense of prudence could not halt, "for the matter of that, 't is on record that this would not be the first time it has changed hands without permission."

"How dare you!" The old man's voice was scarcely above a whisper, but Kerry hurried on.

"I demand instant retraction; I have been belied."

For a moment silence prevailed; then Carmichael spoke, clearly and sternly as before.

"Is the 'Luck' at present in your possession?"

"I know absolutely nothing of it," swore Kerry, inwardly thankful for that fact. "By God! sir, I have borne enough of this. I did not intend to disclose a secret of which I have had knowledge only a short time, but your language and most outrageous charge force me to divulge what will doubtless give you pain. The 'Luck' was stolen — or borrowed" — again he could not restrain his sneer — "by your own son, Nugent Carmichael."

Carmichael's clenched fist fell at his side. He drew a long breath, and then slowly, as if measuring each word, he said: —

"You have filled the measure of your audacity to overflowing, sir, and, not content with being a perjurer, you have dared to accuse my only son. Wait!" as Kerry endeavored to reply, "I have not finished. You have offered me no proof for your last charge; fortunately, I can supply it for mine. My blacks are, as blacks go, — some honest, some

with thievish propensities, — and a servant's charge would not ordinarily have weight against the word of a gentleman. But, by some devilish art, you suborned the Scotch lad, who, born on my own estate in Scotland, I brought with me to America, to disclose where I kept the jewel (a secret which only he and Nugent knew), and to lend it to you for duplication in London, swearing you would forward it to me within the year. When you failed to do so, Duncan revealed the whole tissue of lies and theft to me just before he died."

Kerry, who, with paling face, saw the entire fabric of his deception falling to the ground, cried exultingly: "Died! Then what heed need *I* pay to the ravings of a dead Scotchman?"

"You cannot take refuge there;" the implacable voice was calm and low as ever, but the broad Scotch which always rose to Carmichael's tongue in moments of great emotion sounded now in Kerry's shrinking ears. "Duncan made oath to me as magistrate, — and not to me alone, for I had present Colonel Byrd, my neighbor, also one, — and the signed

and sealed paper is ready to my hand at Carmichael Hall. Wad ye like to see it; or to have yonder journal print the tale — which, for the honor of the family, I have so far suppressed? Ye had the vile heart to strike me where the sore is still unhealed, — to lie, — as I now am ready to believe ye lied when ye told me of that fracas in the theatre. Go! Ye canna blacken wi' your lying tongue the honor of the Carmichaels — go!"

He rose to his feet, that old man, grand in his passionate wrath, and Kerry, without another word, dashed from the room, and the door slammed to behind him.

For a moment he was too overwhelmed with the unexpected failure of his best-laid plan for further action, and he steadied himself against the balustrade as he wiped the beads of perspiration from his face. He must leave the house quickly; no one need know of his coming, for he had seen Betty drive away in her chariot before presenting himself at her door. He waited until he drew freer breath, and then set his foot on the first step downward. As he did so, proceeding cautiously, he heard

a faint noise in the hall below, which, as he descended, proved to be made by a little boy who was marching slowly up and down, talking busily to himself. As Kerry reached the hall, Noll paused in his march, and then advanced toward him.

"Good-day, sir," he said, standing very erect, and giving a military salute; then seeing he was addressing a stranger, he asked, "Do you wish to see my muvver?"

Kerry looked curiously at him, and his eyes lit with amusement as he saw that the little fellow wore a "Buff and Blue" uniform, and had the little dress-sword at his side to complete his costume. His eyes ran over the small figure, and, struck with its appearance, he was about to take Noll's hand when, to his unbounded amazement, he beheld, sparkling on the child's breast, the missing jewel — the "Luck of Rathcoole."

The fire of lust and vengeance lit Kerry's eyes. No time now to question how it came there. Here, — here was his opportunity. He glanced around the hall and saw that they were alone.

"And who are you, sir?" he asked, with an air of exaggerated admiration, drawing close to Noll.

"My name is Oliver Wolcott Yorke — same as Grandfarver Oliver's an' farver's."

"But you wear the uniform of a soldier of the United States?"

"That is what I will be when I get growed up," answered Noll, smiling, "an' vis" — touching the jewel with the conscious pride of a new plaything — "vis is my medal, like very great big soldiers wear; like my Uncle Oliver's. Only vis is sparklier van his."

"Yes," agreed Kerry, bending over him. "Let me look at it," and he started to place his hand upon the jewel.

Something in his voice, or perhaps in his covetous glance, made Noll shrink back.

"Nobody mus' touch my medal," he said quickly.

"Who gave it to you?" asked Kerry, and his tone was a trifle unsteady.

"I — I — found it, all myself." Noll dropped his eyes, and Kerry took instant advantage of the brief second to clutch the locket, intending,

with a sudden wrench, to tear it from his neck, and then dash from the house.

But he reckoned without Noll. For the past year that juvenile soldier had received numerous corrections, in the way of whippings, for a bad habit which he had acquired, and which he now promptly put into execution. As Kerry's hand endeavored to break the chain which held the "Luck," Noll gave a prolonged yell calculated to awaken the soundest sleeper; then, with the fierceness of a small tiger, he buried his teeth in the fleshy palm and held on with all his might. There was a rustle of a gown, unheard by Kerry, and as he bestowed a resounding blow upon Noll's ear, an icy voice said, from the staircase:—

"May I ask, sir, what you are doing? Release my small nephew *at once!*"

"He 's a fief — a fief!" shouted Noll, with unabated fury, as Kerry turned and met Miss Moppet's amazed face. "He tried to take my butiful sparkler —"

"Madam," Kerry drew himself up and confronted her, "to my surprise I recognized in the possession of your nephew (if that is the

relation which this extraordinarily combative child bears to you), I recognized a lost family jewel which belongs to me."

"To you?" Miss Moppet's tone was one of mingled scorn and exultation. "There happens to be a prior claim than yours, sir. Jupiter," as that worthy reached the hall, "open the door — this *gentleman* desires to leave the house."

"Do not trouble yourself, madam," was Kerry's furious reply. "I shall return shortly, and with a search-warrant which will enable me to secure my property."

So saying he darted out of the door, nearly upsetting Jupiter, who gazed after him with open-mouthed amazement as he rushed hurriedly up Wall Street.

"Noll," said Miss Moppet, with severity, "how did you ever — ?"

"Oh, Miss Moppet, Miss Moppet," sobbed the belligerent hero of the occasion, "I did n't have time to draw my sword — "

"Never mind that, Noll. Nature's weapons availed;" and hard as she tried to be dignified and reproving, Miss Moppet's eyes danced

with glee. "But where in the world did you ever find — ?"

"My sparkler?" burst in the culprit; "it was on ve floor in your room behind your trunk — an' — oh! please don't scold? — I jus' wanted to see how it looked on my uniform (mos' like Uncle Oliver's medal, you know), an' I hid it in ve funny place in muvver's desk — "

"Oh, Noll, you blessed conspirator!"

"I never bitted Molly half so bad," reflected Noll, regardless of her interruption, "but I bit vat *bad* man" — vindictively — "I bit him wif *all* my teef 'cause vat was ve *only* way to keep ve sparkler," he wound up triumphantly, waving the prize, as he threw himself into his aunt's arms.

"Noll," said Miss Moppet solemnly, "the Bible says 'the way of the transgressor is hard,' but *your* way of transgressing I must confess is one that I heartily approve." And she kissed the small sinner as she captured the spoils of war.

CHAPTER XVII

The Bar Sinister

WILL it please Monsieur le Lieutenant to rise? If not, I can quickly fetch him his coffee, after which Monsieur le Comte Capitaine asks the pleasure to see him on the quarter-deck."

Nugent opened his eyes and stared, uncomprehending, for a minute at De Valdemont's body-servant, who stood respectfully beside his berth awaiting orders. Surely, this was his own cabin on board La Touraine, but why was his head aching and sore, and who was it that shouted—?

"François, what the devil ails my head?" he exclaimed; "and at what hour did I turn in last night?"

"Monsieur le Lieutenant perhaps does not remember *un accident affreux* wherein he received a blow? He was carried over the ship's side this morning about dawn by Pierre, *maître d'équipage*, and his crew."

"Then there was a fight!" cried Nugent, springing out of his berth and staggering against the valet in his efforts to regain his balance.

"I do not know," answered the man cautiously; "but when Monsieur le Docteur came to examine him he said monsieur was recovering consciousness and sleep was best, after a draft which he persuaded him to swallow."

"Fetch the coffee, François, and say to Monsieur le Comte that as soon as I can dress I will join him on deck."

"Very good, monsieur; breakfast is ordered for eleven o'clock."

The Frenchman left the room as Nugent plunged his head into cold water, and so speedy was he in making his toilet that De Valdemont had just reached the deck when he heard Nugent's hail from the companion-way.

"*Eh bien, mon cher*," was the Count's greeting. "You look well this morning, notwithstanding the severe blow with which some villain attempted to end your career last night.

At first, when you were brought aboard, Doctor de Tourney thought it a serious matter, but you Scots have strong heads, — yes?"

"Mine at least seems proof against all attack," laughed Nugent. "I am burning with curiosity to account for this last adventure, for, although I had warning last evening of an enemy's presence in the city, I am at a loss to know who attacked me. I only recollect shouting for Pierre and his crew. My assailants had entangled me in a blanket, or I had given a better account of myself, though I believe they had an advantage of numbers, for I am certain a gang of —"

"Six ruffians, Pierre reports. But I, alas! am the one in fault."

"You?" Nugent looked his surprise. "Pray, what had you to do with it?"

"This — I have not been able to find you for a talk for the last forty-eight hours, and I meant to warn you not to go unarmed." And De Valdemont, seating himself beside Nugent, gave a rapid account of his being at the King's Arms, where he had gone to meet De Grammont, who had at the last moment been pre-

vented from joining him, and of his overhearing the plot for Nugent's undoing.

"So the favor shown me by the O'Halloran seems but a trick with which she intends to place me in the power of my enemy," said Nugent, as De Valdemont ended his story. "I shall begin to believe in the 'Luck,' and that until it is found and returned to the Nugent don, my grandfather, we will all remain under the ban of its curse. Egad! De Valdemont, could I but ascertain who this persistent enemy is — I have it," Nugent sprang from his chair, "I will go to Patrice and demand his name."

"After breakfast," replied De Valdemont, laying a restraining hand upon his friend's shoulder. "As to his name, I can tell you that, for not only did I catch a passing glimpse of him with the O'Halloran a few nights ago, but I had some knowledge of him in Paris. He was mixed up in a rather unsavory affair at one of the clubs, although he contrived to emerge from it without being actually proved guilty. His name is Fitzgerald, and he is an Irishman of family. I have no knowledge of the cause of

his enmity to you. He has been the principal in several rather scandalous duels."

"He bids fair to have another on his hands," said Nugent grimly. "And this time there will be no unlucky scapegoat to shield him."

"But Nugent, *mon cher*," — De Valdemont hesitated, — "are you quite in condition for such an encounter? Doctor de Tourney would, I am sure, counsel —"

"To the devil with counsel — this affair does not admit of parley. Will you act as my second?"

"With all my heart," cried De Valdemont impetuously. "And now, to breakfast."

Some two hours later the owner of the "Rose and Crown," in response to a rap from the brass knocker which adorned his doorway, found a gentleman standing upon the stoop who asked politely whether Mistress O'Halloran was within, and upon being assured that she had not yet gone to the theatre for rehearsal, asked that his card might be given her, and said he would await her pleasure. But before the messenger could climb the stairs, Dopple, who had been peeping out from

behind the window curtain, flew into the room where Patrice sat at her desk writing a letter and exclaimed: —

"Oh, madam, he has come — all in uniform, and handsomer than ever!"

"Who has come, pray, and why do you enter without the good manners of a knock on my door? It appears, Dopple, that this country is demoralizing you," said her mistress. "Did I not tell you I was not to be disturbed for half an hour, as I am writing a ship letter."

"Yes, madam," answered Dopple humbly, "but the card is on the way, and I thought you would like to know that it is the gentleman — the young officer who came so often to see you when we were in Paris."

Patrice raised her hand; but her face paled slightly, as she said calmly, "Answer the door and give me the card."

Dopple did as she was ordered, and stood waiting for the reply. After a second's pause, it came.

"Ask the gentleman to walk upstairs; I will see him at once." Then, "Dopple, go down into the shop, and should Mr. Fitzgerald

come before my visitor leaves me, say that I am engaged at present, but will be at home this afternoon at four."

Nugent, after mounting the stairs swiftly, rapped gently on the closed door of her parlor, and the silver voice he remembered gave him permission to enter. In the few seconds afforded her, Patrice had staged her part well, for he found her standing near a window, that, filled with gay flowers, formed a background of color against which her white gown and graceful shape stood forth to the greatest possible advantage.

"At last," she murmured, as Nugent, uncertain of her mood, waited to be addressed. "At last you have found me. But why delay so long?" giving him her hand as he bowed low and ceremoniously; "surely" — with anxiety — "you have not been ill?"

Nothing could have been more caressing than her voice; but Nugent, looking full in her eyes, caught a gleam of fire which hardly accorded with her words.

"That I am not in worse case than simply suffering with a somewhat dazed head this

morning is not the fault of the ruffians who endeavored to seize me last night," he said quietly. "To whom, Patrice, did you entrust the attack made upon me?"

"An attack?" she gasped, and Nugent saw that her surprise was, at least for the moment, genuine. "What enigma is this? Explain it at once, for my wits are not of the quickest to-day." And she motioned him to a chair at her side as she threw herself upon the *chaise longue.*

"There is much to be explained between us, Patrice; perhaps I may as well go back of last night and ask why you have not kept the promise you made me in Paris —"

"Which one?" she interrupted saucily, with an enchanting smile. "Come, sir, it occurs to me that you have not kept a promise made me — the one, *par exemple*, to meet me at the ball at Apthorpe House, where, if my memory holds, I was amiable enough to let you know the color of my domino. Why did you not avail yourself of my invitation to join me at the mask?"

Nugent, taken for an instant off his guard,

replied: "I did seek you, Patrice;" then hastily, — "there were three yellow dominos there, and — "

"Ah, sir, you danced on the lawn, I hear — "

"But not with a yellow domino!" Nugent uttered a silent thanksgiving for his escape. "You are evading the question; why have you not given me the 'Luck'?"

"Because, you most persistent of men, I have lost it — or rather, it has again gone on its travels."

"Where?" If she desired to fence he was quite at her service.

The mischievous, teasing smile left her lips; she leaned a little nearer him, and there was something at once pathetic and vindictive in her beautiful eyes.

"There was a time, Nugent Carmichael, when you might have asked of me not merely the 'Luck' of your house, but far, far more, and I would gladly have granted — all! But to-day I tell you that were the 'Luck' here, in my hand," — she smote her palm, — "I would fling it into the fire before you should ever touch it again."

"What have I done?" he cried, in amazement.

"You must have seen,—you could hardly be so blind,—though men are that same the world over when a woman's heart lies at their feet," she said bitterly. "And why should I aid you to regain what, were justice done, belongs more to me than to you? Listen!"—she sprang to her feet,—"the black, bitter secret which has been kept this many a long year shall be told you. I, too, am a Nugent; but the same blood that beats so hotly in my veins is crossed"—a sob cut her throat; her voice sank to a whisper—"aye, crossed by the bar sinister."

"For God's sake, Patrice, explain!" He caught her hand in his; her look of agony cut him to the heart.

"Explain?" she cried wildly. "It is the old story of man's inhumanity to women. The curse was put upon your great-grandfather and mine, the Nugent don of King Charles's day; and why? Because *before* he wedded Mona Nugent he had loved and thrown away his toy—Aileen O'Halloran, the most lovely col-

leen in County Kildare, where the fame of her beauty lives to this day. She was the only child of Margaret O'Halloran, Mona Nugent's nurse, and 't was Margaret who laid the curse upon him out of which came the prophecy which you recited to me in Paris."

"Why has this story never reached me?" asked Nugent, profoundly moved by her emotion; "and why do you tell it now?"

"Because I have had a letter from your grandfather. The old man longs for one of his own blood, for he lives in lonely state at Rathcoole. He asks me if you are still alive, and above all he desires to have the 'Luck' restored. Ah, Nugent," her wonderful voice changed to marvelous sweetness as she pleaded, "I am fair, I am gifted, and they say the world lies at my feet. Give me your love and your name, cleanse me of the stain which clings to me through a man's willful passions —make me legally a Nugent of the direct line; then take me to your grandfather, and this letter" — snatching it up from her desk — "shall be answered by — "

"What letter, madam?" inquired a cold,

cutting voice from the doorway, where Kerry stood, an evil smile upon his dark face. "May I ask the name of the writer of this apparently treasured epistle?"

"You may not, sir," retorted Nugent hotly, taking the letter from her cold hand. "How dare you attempt to dictate to Mistress O'Halloran? Patrice, who is this intruder?"

But her mood had changed, and a mocking smile lit her face. She looked years older as she stepped forward between the two men.

"'T is a pity you came just now, Kerry," she said, "for I have not concluded my interview; but so be it. I take pleasure in presenting you properly to each other which was, I am told, a formality omitted at your first meeting." "This gentleman," addressing Nugent, "is your cousin, Kerry Fitzgerald Nugent—"

"Nay," interrupted Kerry angrily. "Lay not so much emphasis upon my relationship with the Carmichaels. 'T is not one I boast of. Say, rather, that I am Lord Riverston of Riverston; my grandfather, the Chief Justice of Ireland, having been made a peer of the realm by King James II. But because the peerage

A MOCKING SMILE LIT HER FACE

was conferred after the King's abdication our present sovereign refuses to acknowledge my rank, unless" — sneeringly — "unless he receives a substantial sum for restoring it to me."

"I present you," went on Patrice, paying no heed to Kerry's interruption, "to Leftenant Nugent Carmichael, the lawful owner" — her voice quivered on the word — "of the 'Luck of Rathcoole,' which Lord Riverston, for motives of his own, is now seeking in America."

Nugent clapped his hand upon his sword.

"Stand aside, Patrice," he cried. "I have a score to settle with this new-found relative of mine. I have sought you long, sir, not knowing who you were; and this time you shall not escape me."

"I shall be happy to oblige you," sneered Kerry, whipping out his sword also. But Patrice still stood between them, her eyes glowing with anger, her cheeks flaming with color.

"Stop!" Her haughty command rang out clearly. "Did I not tell you, Kerry, I would manage this affair in my own way, and that bloodshed should have no part in it?"

Both men paused, and Kerry, obedient to her gesture, lowered the point of his sword to the floor.

"Patrice," Nugent burst forth, "you cannot understand the evil this man has done me; and he shall answer for it. But not in your presence. My address, sir," turning to Kerry, as he sheathed his sword, "is at present the French man-of-war, La Touraine, which lies yonder in the harbor, and her commander, Captain the Count deValdemont, will serve me as second."

"I have not yet completed my introduction," the O'Halloran said calmly, as she turned to Nugent. "Lord Riverston is my promised husband. He has wronged you bitterly; but remembering what has just passed between you and me,"—she paused significantly,—"I ask you to forego your just vengeance. Hush!" for Kerry started forward with an oath. "Unless you, Lord Riverston, agree to the pact I am making for you — for *you*,"—her burning eyes sought Kerry's,—"I shall sail for England without you and everything will be over between us. Choose, gentlemen. I will not allow you to leave my presence without first giving

me your word of honor that this affair ends here."

Proudly Kerry straightened himself and walked to the door.

"You have my word, Patrice," he said. "I yield to you, and you *alone;* for in possessing you I win the greater prize. At your service, sir." And with a stately bow to Nugent, he closed the door behind him.

For a moment the silence was unbroken in the room. The color flamed again in Patrice's cheeks; she looked at Nugent with her soul in her eyes, and his generous heart melted with pity for the beautiful woman whom the crime of long ago had left with the stain of illegitimacy. He would never betray the knowledge — no, not even to the sweetheart whose love was to atone for all he had suffered, and for her dear sake —

"Lord Riverston is safe from my vengeance," he said slowly. "Conscience may do what my regard for your wishes causes me to relinquish."

"Nugent!" her arms were around his neck,

her beautiful face against his. "One kiss before we part — my only love, farewell! Sometimes remember the wild Irish girl whose heart you have read to-day."

There were tears in Nugent's eyes as he went slowly down the staircase, but in the room above a woman lay prone upon the floor.

"I have taken part in many dramas," wept the O'Halloran. "'T was my own happiness I played for to-day — *and lost!*"

CHAPTER XVIII

"*What I Have, I Hold*"

"TIS true, every word," laughed Betty. "And although I should be a Spartan mother and urge you to keep your promise and punish him, when I picture the scene, of which Moppet gave graphic description, I can do nothing but clap my hands and secretly admire the tiny champion of the Wolcotts."

Yorke roared with laughter. "Do you mean that Noll—Noll—actually bested that big Irishman, unaided and alone? Egad, Betty, I am proud of him. Punish him, did you remark? You may essay it, if you can keep a straight face, but I vow I'll not lay finger on the youngster."

"But, Geoffrey, he '*bitted* him worse than Molly,' and you know that military discipline requires—"

"I know that I have a charming tease for a wife, and a plucky little soldier for a son; which is quite knowledge enough on my part."

And Yorke kissed Betty's mischievous face as he escaped and ran lightly down the staircase.

It had been an exciting morning in the household. A messenger had brought a letter to Miss Moppet which required an immediate answer; Colin Carmichael had sent his compliments to Yorke requesting an interview with him at his convenience. And Noll, being under temporary confinement in the nursery, was solacing himself by giving a vivid and particular account of his achievements to Molly, while he awaited his father's appearance, divided between exultation and remorse, not unmixed with wonder as to what form the expected punishment might take.

Peggy, whose repose had been suddenly routed by Noll's exploit, was burning with curiosity to know what in the world had happened, and being unable to find Miss Moppet (who, in the seclusion of her own room, was writing a reply to Nugent's second letter), decided that she would go for a walk before dinner, and in rather a doleful frame of mind donned her prettiest gown, and descending,

opened the front door herself without waiting for Jupiter, who was absent from his post in the hall.

But the slender figure in blue nearly fell over a gentleman in cinnamon-brown small-clothes who had just mounted the steps, and, in the act of raising his hand to the brass knocker, encountered Peggy instead.

"I — I — beg your pardon!" cried the startled lady.

"It was all my fault," bowed the gentleman, stretching out his arm in time to prevent Peggy's falling on her pretty nose, and devoutly wishing he could maintain the attitude a few seconds longer, as Peggy, palpitating and rosy, withdrew from his sheltering arm.

"You were coming to call on us — ?"

"And you were going for a walk — ?"

Simultaneously — then the pair began over again, both equally embarrassed.

"Not to call on '*us*,'" said Philip Van Cortlandt, taking heart of grace, as Peggy stood hesitating on the threshold. "I was coming to inquire for you only, Mistress Provoost, and"

—Jupiter making his belated appearance in the background—"do not let me prevent you from going forth."

Peggy turned her head, saw Jupiter throwing open the drawing-room door, and was lost.

"There is no haste about my errand," she said demurely, "and as the day is somewhat warm we will come inside."

But by the time she reached the drawing-room and bestowed herself on the highest and straightest-backed chair she could find, she had become the Peggy of Aunt Anneke's pattern, shy and unapproachable, and Philip, from his equally uncomfortable seat, viewed her with growing dismay.

"I trust you had no ill effects from the crowded levee," began Philip, after a few opening remarks as to the state of the weather had been exchanged.

"My head ached this morning," replied Peggy primly, "but it is better now; that is—the fresh air always does improve me."

Philip's sense of humor was not highly developed, but the brief interval of fresh air as obtained on the doorstep did afford him a

gleam of satisfaction quite out of proportion to its duration.

"I trust you enjoyed the evening," continued Philip, "although I did not see as much of you as I could have desired."

"Indeed?" with sudden resentful recollection of his sparring with Kerry. "At one time I thought you quite" — hesitating — "*almost* rude to dispute as you did with Mr. Fitzgerald."

"'Rude'?" echoed Philip. "You mistake. That Irishman was becoming most familiar, and I particularly disliked his manner of using your fan."

"Did you?" — freezingly.

"I never before supposed you a coquette," — with dignity.

They were now on the road to a very pretty quarrel. Peggy, biting her lips, and Philip, with heightened color, playing with the cord of his sword-knot, glared at each other across the desert of highly polished floor which separated the straight-backed chairs. Peggy wondered how Miss Moppet would have answered this charge, and in endeavoring to recollect

something sufficiently withering gave a frantic pull at the blue silk reticule which hung at her side. The string, under the unusual strain, gave way, and out fell scissors, powder-puff, handkerchief, and a tiny ball of thread which obligingly rolled in Philip's direction. They both started to arise simultaneously, but Peggy's high-heeled slippers slid along the waxed expanse just as Philip bent down to seize the still rolling ball, and another untimely collision was averted by Peggy's sitting down on the floor, rather too abruptly for dignity, to find Philip emerging from under the centre-table on his hands and knees before her!

"Peggy, dearest, are you hurt?" formality and wrath thrown to the winds, as he saw a dainty slipper fly past him.

"Not much," gasped Peggy. "Oh, I have lost my shoe!" And she tried to tuck her little blue-stockinged foot under her gown, a quite impossible proceeding owing to the narrowness of her skirt. "Would you mind very much looking the other way?" — desperately striving to clutch her slipper which was just beyond her reach.

"Yes, I should mind exceedingly." Audacious Philip seized his opportunity with quickness which did him credit. "For I am going to put it on your dear little foot" — and Peggy's primness took wings and fled in horror as a masculine hand secured the slipper, while its owner leaned over and kissed her on the lips. "But I shall not put it on until you promise to marry me the very first moment after I have gone to Albany and begged Aunt Anneke's permission."

"I might want time to get a wedding-gown," sighed Peggy, with a thrill of delight, leaning against his shoulder as he knelt beside her. "Philip," — demurely, but with a twinkle of her blue eyes, — "I think — you may adjust the slipper."

Half an hour later Miss Moppet ascending the staircase demanded of Jupiter, who was coming down, whether Colonel Carmichael was in the library, and on receiving an affirmative reply, she said softly, addressing a tall figure who followed close on her footsteps: —

"Wait just a minute on the landing until I

call you. He has been ill, you know, and it might not be well to startle him."

She opened the library door noiselessly, and entered, leaving it slightly ajar. Colin Carmichael was seated by the centre table, but he rose, with his courtly grace, as he said playfully:—

"Ah, fairest of maids, you have neglected me to-day; this is your first visit, and I have missed my playfellow."

"But you were not alone, for Geoffrey has just been with you, and beside,"—she hesitated so briefly that it was hardly more than a change of tone,—"you had other visitors."

Carmichael's handsome face clouded. "I had—an intruder," he said briefly, "and dismissed him."

But Miss Moppet, having dared all, was not dismayed by the stern reply. "If you are not too fatigued," she said sweetly,—and the gray eyes charged with subtle green lights were raised frankly to his,—"there is another visitor who begs to see you,—one in whom I am deeply interested,"—with a lovely blush at the admission. "He is one whom you have not

seen for years; years that have been as lonely and heart-breaking to him as those you have spent alone on the banks of the James. But he longs to see you — to hold your hand once more in his and say — "

"Father!" A tall form came springing over the threshold, and Miss Moppet held her breath as the two men confronted each other.

Then the silence was broken by a great cry —

"My son; my only son!" Carmichael clasped Nugent in his close embrace as he had been used to hold him in his childhood. But as soon as he could speak coherently, he turned to the waiting girl. "Miss Moppet, Miss Moppet, what shall be done to ye, ye darling chiel? Ye gar me greet." And down Colin Carmichael's face, as he raised his head from Nugent's shoulder, tears were falling — tears that lifted the burden of years from his heart.

"There is but one way," whispered Miss Moppet, with cheerful audacity, despite the fact that her own eyes were wet, "and that is — this" — and lifting her face to his she kissed him with charming grace.

"Ha, Nugent," the old man laughed gleefully, "dinna ye wish ye were in my place, the noo? What wad ye gie for ain sic salute?"

"Ask for it," retorted Nugent, as he took Miss Moppet's hand in his.

"'Sits the wind in that quarter'?" cried the delighted father. "And pray, what has my auld friend, Oliver Wolcott, said to ye baith?"

"We have not had time to ask him as yet; it has been so amazingly swift — and Nugent is so masterful" — with a roguish smile in his direction. "But as my father has never yet denied me, I think (although I cannot be absolutely certain)," — retreating behind the shelter of Colin Carmichael's broad shoulders, — "with due persuasion, he may be induced to give his consent."

"Ah, lassie, ye hae a way wi' ye; I said it, frae the first time I laid eyes on ye. For my part, naithing could gie me so much happiness and joy as to ca' Oliver Wolcott's chiel my dochter."

"But, father, though your unquestioning forgiveness is very dear to me, there is much to be explained," said Nugent, after a while,

when they were all seated beside the table and had become more coherent. "You cannot begin to know what I owe to my sweetheart —"

"Nugent!" a warning voice interrupted. "'T was Fate, or good Fortune — and I was only a pawn in the game."

"Not a pawn, but the Queen," Colin Carmichael interposed gallantly. "Aye, Nugent, I can well believe it; but what do you wish to tell me?"

"First, that the Frenchman whom I was so unfortunate as to find, by a trick, before my sword's point that night at the Theatre Royal, still lives, and in a few days will be in New York to vouch for the truth of my story, which is too long to tell to-day."

"He was my French professor up in Litchfield town," broke in Miss Moppet. "And by a strange coincidence I guessed his identity, and have already sent for him."

"How that Irish scoundrel lied," burst forth Carmichael. "Thank God! I thrust his falsehoods down his throat this very day. Nugent, he told me when he came to visit me in Vir-

ginia, where for kinship's sake I had bidden him as my guest when I learned that he was in this country, he told me 't was *you* who gave the insult to the actress, and *he* who resented it. Oh, he turned every trick to his advantage — and told me a tissue of falsehoods to boot. But let him pass; we have other and happier things to talk of — "

" As, for instance, this." And the " Luck of Rathcoole " sparkled in the sunlight as Nugent laid it in his father's hand.

" My God, 't is the ' Luck ' ! " The old man sank back in his chair, and they started toward him in alarm. But joy never kills; and he waved them back as, holding the jewel, he demanded how it came into Nugent's possession.

" It was a case of David and Goliath," said Nugent, with a laughing glance at Miss Moppet; " but the weapon used in this instance was quite as effective and just as primitive as a sling."

" Vat 's my sparkler," interrupted a shrill little treble, and Noll suddenly appeared on the scene from the open door where he had been standing unnoticed for some minutes.

"I bitted the man when he tried to seize it. Oh, Mr. Inky-New, how did you get it?" And he regarded Nugent with amazed eyes.

"Come here, Noll," said Miss Moppet's warning voice.

"Good-day, Mr. Inky-New." Noll recollected good manners and saluted, which act of courtesy Nugent returned with due gravity. "We are very happy to see you, and Colonel Carmichael is too, is n't you?" looking anxiously up at the old man who sat watching him with much amusement. "Who is Mr. Inky-New, if you please, sir?" he continued. "My muvver says he is a friend of hers, an' I know he is a friend of Miss Moppet's, 'cause I saw him kiss her in ve hall."

"Noll," Miss Moppet's laughter, in which both the others joined, filled the room, "you certainly are a transgressor!"

"I don't know what vat long word means," replied the culprit, frowning in his effort to understand, "but"—with sudden recollection —"vat 's what you said vis morning when you kissed me—"

But further revelations were lost, for Miss

Moppet repeated the kiss, and shook her head to enforce his silence.

"'Luck shall be lost, and found no more,
Till Green seeks Blue —'"

Colin Carmichael paused, and a gleam of humor lit his kindly smile. "So the Green has sought and found the Blue," he continued, and again his voice shook with emotion. "Noll," he turned quickly and beckoned the boy to approach him, as he slid down from Miss Moppet's arms, "Noll, I have not yet heard the story of how, or where, your 'sparkler' was found, but I wish to ask you to whom do you think it should be given?"

Noll looked gravely at the old man, as he considered the question; they could see the boy's longing for his plaything plainly written on his face. Then a smile broke out, and he answered:—

"I've been finking very hard,—'cause I do want to play wif it sometimes,—but I fink vat it would look bu-ti-ful on Miss Moppet's neck,—so"—with a relieved sigh—"let 's give it to her."

"Bravo, Noll! A child's wisdom cuts the

Gordian Knot. Nugent, you may clasp the 'Luck of Rathcoole' around Miss Moppet's fair neck. It used to lie above another just as fair."

Carmichael's voice broke in a sob of mingled joy and sorrow as Nugent took the necklet from his trembling hand.

But as Miss Moppet bent her lovely head to receive the long-lost jewel of the Nugents the tender words he had upon his tongue were forgotten, and instead Nugent's arms stole around her while he cried aloud the triumphant slogan of Clan Carmichael: —

"*What I have, I hold!*"

THE END

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